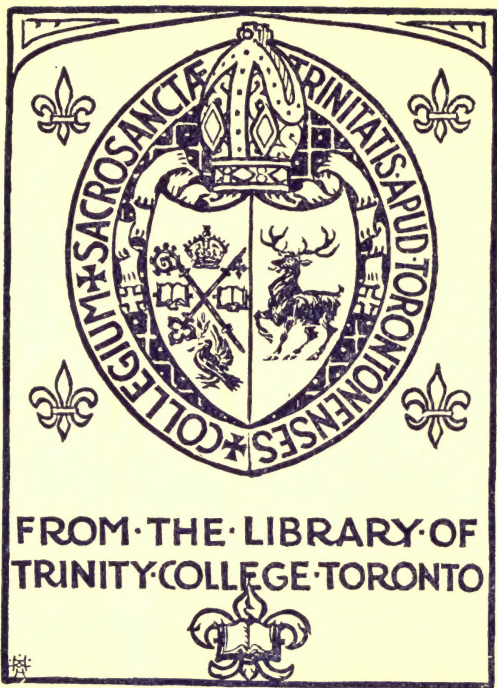


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THE CATHOLIC FAITH IN
PRACTICE

THE CATHOLIC FAITH IN PRACTICE

IN ENGLISH PARISHES

BY

FRANCIS UNDERHILL

VICAR OF ST ALBAN'S, BIRMINGHAM

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TO
THE ASSISTANT PRIESTS
OF ST ALBAN'S, BIRMINGHAM
WITH AFFECTION AND
GRATITUDE



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THE CATHOLIC FAITH IN PRACTICE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THIS book is a brief description of a method which is being used for the edification and conversion of souls by a body of priests within the Church of England; a method which, though old as the hills, is in its application a novelty among us. It is a statement, and not an apology in the modern sense of the word, for men do not apologise when they are convinced that they have found the Pearl of great price. It will have to take partly the form of a defence against the attacks which are so persistently made against the Catholic Faith in the Church of England, because it is necessary to make something more than a mere statement of methods and ideas which are so

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widely misunderstood and so widely suspected by those in authority in the Church of England.

It might have been thought that a method which in general outline has been worked with such excellent results throughout the great body of the Catholic Church would have been accepted by the leaders of the English Church without the opposition with which the Catholic Revival has been almost everywhere met. It is indeed true that if the method of working out of the Catholic Revival in all its implications is a circumstance which ought to cause trembling, then there are good grounds for fear; for there is no doubt whatever that the movement is making ground everywhere, among clergy and lay people alike. It is being found highly effective, and the need for a living religion which has been brought home to us by the War is making its suppression an impossibility.

It will be well therefore that our authorities should give their most careful and sympathetic attention to it, however extreme and revolutionary it may in some aspects seem to be.

The Word "Catholic"

At this point it will be well to clear up one issue arising out of our use of terms. What

do we mean by the word "Catholic"? In what sense should it be used? All claim it, if only by virtue of its appearance in the Creeds, and many persons are unwilling to allow its use to be restricted to those doctrines and practices which they particularly dislike; just as some of us object to the use of the word "evangelical" as describing exclusively the position of those who repudiate many of the beliefs which are distinctive of the historic Catholic Church.

What will be meant in this book by the word "catholic" is, generally, that body of teaching and practice which is common to the whole body of the Catholic Church, East and West. The method of conversion and edification which will be described as actually working in English parishes is one which is very well known, even though many really good people are frightened by it.

In important details it will be found that we follow the Western Church rather than the Eastern, as is most natural; for the Catholic Revival all along the line, as I hope to show later, has been a return to the Western expression of Faith and Western practices of devotion. My purpose at this point is simply to clear up the use which will be made

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in the following pages of this controversial word. I do not wish to hurt anyone's feelings, and I hope all who read them will understand what I mean.

Persons to whom the Appeal is made

There are three bodies of persons in the English Church whose understanding and sympathy this book is designed to reach.

First, the Bishops of the Provinces of Canterbury and York, if any of them do me the honour of reading it. It is not too much to say that the Bishops as a body are very far from being in full sympathy with the Catholic Movement, and that thus deplorable misunderstandings often occur.

Second, those priests whose sympathies are Catholic but who have never had the opportunity of seeing the complete Catholic method at work.

Third, the great body of moderate churchmen within the Church of England, who strongly mistrust what they call "High Church doctrine and practice."

1. It is difficult to express the pain which is felt by Catholic priests and laymen at the unsympathetic attitude of Authority towards

the ideas and practices which to them are the dearest things in the world. It seems to us simply inexplicable that good and holy men, whose object is the furtherance of Christ's Kingdom on earth, should have often persecuted and opposed the spread of the Catholic Movement in their dioceses; and what is the most extraordinary thing of all is that they seem to think it unnecessary to apologise for or to explain this attitude. It seems to be taken for granted in many Episcopal minds that to be High Church, still worse to be "extreme," implies, if not moral turpitude, at least moral dishonesty and complete untrustworthiness. Most Bishops, with a few notable exceptions, seem to feel bound to do their utmost to crush the Catholic Movement, or to damn it with faint praise, while our attitude has lately been stigmatised by a very high Authority as "worse than deplorable."

Even sympathetic Bishops seem to think it natural to treat Catholic priests as if they were naughty boys, or as persons who are doing a good work in a somewhat undesirable fashion, whose enthusiasm is misplaced and whose outlook is narrow. This may be amusing on the surface and at the moment, but

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underneath it is highly resented by serious men.

This attitude is often expressed by the use of the words "ritual" and "ritualistic." Bishops who really mean to be sympathetic will tell us that they themselves know nothing about ritual; or that really they are not interested in ritual, one way or the other; as though ritual was what we cared about. It is true that ceremonial has its right and necessary place in the ordering of the services of the Church according to the Catholic model; but it is absurd to suggest that it is a love of ritual which distinguishes us from those other good men who are working to bring souls to Christ.

The fact is that our Bishops do not understand us. They very seldom come to our characteristic services, for in most dioceses it is taken for granted that if the Bishop comes to preach it must be at a "simple service" (though here there are well-known exceptions). They very seldom hear us preach, and have, therefore, quite a wrong idea of the proportion of the Faith as we set it forth. Too often they seem to feel that the less they know of us and our doings the better. It seems to be taken for granted that if they do get to know

certain facts it will be at once necessary to apply discipline.

The unhappy result of all this is that in only too many dioceses—and here I wish it to be understood that I except the diocese in which my own happy lot is cast—there is a state of perpetual feud between the Bishop and the Catholic churches under his rule. The Bishop is regarded as hopeless. His priests do not dream of consulting him about difficulties which normally would be taken immediately to the Diocesan, while the “High Church party”—I hate the phrase—is regarded by the Bishop as outside the pale. He lives and moves and has his being in a circle of moderate and low churchmen who have all the influence and all the preferments in the diocese.

This state of things, which I do not think in the least is exaggerated, is truly deplorable. It is an old trouble, and is still far from finding a solution; it makes for disunion and mutual suspicion; it causes the Bishops to misunderstand us, and embitters the minds of Catholics towards the moderate. It scandalises the devout Catholic laity, who simply cannot understand why the Bishop is so hostile or so lukewarm with regard to

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their priests and their parishes, and it gives a handle to Protestant agitators by which they are quick to stir up religious strife.

It is with the greatest reluctance that I make a short reference to another aspect of this matter. I do so only because it is necessary that it should be mentioned. It is extremely rare that priests holding "extreme" views obtain what is called "preferment" in the Church of England, though there are many who are fully worthy of it. They do not desire the Episcopate or other high office from reasons of personal ambition; they do desire it in order that they may have an opportunity for setting forth from that eminence an explanation of their ideas which is at present denied them. There is no "extreme" man on the Bench of Bishops, and therefore a strong body within the Church of England is unrepresented in the Episcopal Councils.

If in what I have written I have shown disrespect to the Bishops, or have erred in good taste I humbly apologise; but I do appeal to my Fathers in God to consider whether a better understanding cannot be found between them and some of the keenest and most enthusiastic of their clergy. These

men are giving of their best, often in circumstances of difficulty and privation, to serve the Church of Christ. They desire to go on their way in peace; but they desire more than that; they believe that in so comprehensive a body as the Church of England the same consideration and sympathy ought to be extended to all, and that all should be allowed to have their voice in the government of the whole.

2. *Catholic Priests*.—There are very many priests throughout the Church of England who accept in principle the Catholic conception of the Church and of the priesthood; who believe that it is the best of all methods for bringing souls to God and for leading our nation back to the practice of religion, but who have never had the opportunity of seeing the Catholic method at work in its completeness. They have “come on,” as the expression is, since their ordination, or else they have felt it their duty to work in parishes whose teaching and practice are more moderate than their own views.

Many of these are longing to carry out in their own spheres of work the complete Catholic way of doing things. Others, a good many, are doubtful about some points

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of teaching or practice with which perhaps they have little personal sympathy, or of which they have little knowledge. They are mistrustful of those who are known as "extreme" men, and prefer a slower and more cautious method of introducing Catholicism. It may be also that they have a horror of anything which comes from Roman Catholic sources. God forbid that I should even seem to be lecturing my brethren. If it should seem that there is anything in the following pages which sounds didactic it is not really so. I write as one who is seriously trying to work out the complete Catholic method in an English parish, as I believe we have a full right to do; and all I ask is sympathetic reading and consideration of the conclusions to which I and many others have come. There is a real danger, never more acute than at the present time, of a cleavage between those who are honestly seeking what is essentially the same goal; and it is exacerbated by misunderstandings, personal as well as ecclesiastical, which may be much softened by a frank and open confession of the things for which we, the extreme men, are working.

If some of the truths stated and methods

advocated in this book seem startling and novel, at least they represent a very serious effort, which has the growing support of an earnest body of clergy and laity, to supply something which all Catholics admit to be wanting at the present time; and to infuse life into a body which is admittedly out of touch with the spiritual aspirations of the nation. What we believe we have found is a plan for conversion and edification which is new and yet old, which we may hope will stir the dry bones of religious life in England; and surely this is a matter of the most profound interest to the English clergy.

3. *The Central Body*.—I would appeal thirdly to that great central body of men and women who belong to the Church of England and look upon the official Church of England as representative of the national view of religion; who are greatly attached to the principle of moderation in ecclesiastical matters and are strongly opposed to extremes of any kind. There can be no doubt that this great and important body of opinion has to be seriously reckoned with by those who would call themselves reformers. As a body it profoundly mistrusts what we call Catholicism, or what is usually known in the Church of

England as "High Church." On principle those who hold these views are eagerly on the alert to oppose and if possible to stop anything which tends in a Catholic direction. And these good people are perfectly right if what they believe of us and of the direction of our aims is likely to be as fatal to English freedom and English religion as they think. It may very likely be that after reading the plain statement contained in this book they will still be determined to oppose the introduction of such methods as are described in it. It may seem shocking to some readers that such opinions should be held by persons who remain within the Church of England. I can assure them that there are many such persons, and that their number is rapidly increasing. But again I beg for a sympathetic study of views which may seem startling and unwelcome. When accomplished facts are with us, our kindest and wisest plan is to try to understand before condemning them. There will be no disguises in the pages which follow ; plain words will be used and plain facts will be stated ; so I would pray for a putting away of prejudice, so far as is possible. We are not seeking to enslave the souls of English men and women, nor to produce a religion of formal-

ism, but to lead them to that service which is perfect freedom.

It must of necessity be that this book will seem scrappy and superficial. Almost all of the points touched on in it have been dealt with in many volumes already, and will be the subject of many volumes more. But it seems worth while to offer what is little more than a series of headings, or suggestions for further thought. At the end there will be found a short Appendix giving a few of the chief books which may be consulted on the matters so briefly referred to in this book.

CHAPTER II

THE CATHOLIC CONCEPTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

IT will be generally agreed that one of the chief elements in producing a Catholic atmosphere and furthering the spread of the Faith is a right conception of the sacred ministry of the Church—that is to say, the character and duties of the priesthood as understood by the priest himself and by the people among whom he works. This chapter will be devoted to a brief consideration of three ideas: 1. What is a priest and what is his character? 2. How is this kind of character produced and maintained? 3. The relation of priest and people. 4. What should be the relation between priests working together in the same parish?

1. Of all the changes brought about within the Church by the Oxford Movement few have been so fundamental as the altered position of the priesthood. If we look back for one hundred years to the clergymen, say, of Jane Austen's novels, and compare them with the clergy of to-day, who have been influenced

by the revival, we shall see this point clearly. Mr Elton and Dr Grant, and even such excellent young men as Edmund Bertram or Henry Tilney, are very far even from claiming anything which bears much resemblance to Catholic priesthood. Mr Elton dances, he dines out on Christmas Eve, when a Catholic priest would be busy in his confessional ; he flirts, he drinks rather too much of Mr Weston's good wine, and he makes a proposal of marriage (which is declined) in the carriage on the way home. Shortly afterwards he marries another lady out of pique ; and yet he is apparently a thoroughly respected parish clergyman, and evidently carries out the duties expected of him in an efficient manner.

Compare him with the ideal of the Catholic priest to which thousands of clergy to-day aspire and there is a world of difference. Protestant controversialists seize on sacerdotalism as a great opportunity for their attack on the Faith. And very rightly, from their point of view, for true sacerdotalism, true priestliness as distinguished from a merely personal tyranny or a merely personal attraction, is one of the hall-marks of the Catholic religion, and a vital part of that conception of Christianity which we are striving to regain.

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And so we see in the Church of England ever since about 1835 two conceptions of the ministry struggling for predominance; and the battle still continues. On the one hand, we have the clergyman who is regarded as one of the resident gentry of the neighbourhood, a well-educated man setting the example of a good family life, taking his part in social activities, and fulfilling his ministerial duties of reading the service and preaching on Sundays, administering Baptism, Holy Communion, Marriage and Burial of the Dead according to rule. He is supposed to be consulted by his parishioners in their difficulties though he often finds this opportunity is taken advantage of much less than he would wish. In these later days the young clergyman is expected to add other activities to these: he must be able to manage clubs, to arrange concerts, football matches and other entertainments. It is regarded as being one of his greatest virtues if he is athletic. No one will deny that many of these men are good active clergymen, respected and beloved; but they are certainly not what the Catholic Church means by a priest.

On the other side we have the priest according to the Catholic conception. He is a man

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who has been called by God and ordained to the priesthood. His duty is to administer the Sacraments and to teach the Faith. He is God's instrument for the conversion and edification of the Christian souls who are committed to his care. He occupies a unique position in the place where his lot is cast. He stands at the Altar representing the people before the Presence of God. He sits in his confessional week by week as spiritual physician and judge. His duty is to direct, to heal, to rebuke, to exhort, as the ambassador of God. He must be an expert in moral theology—that is, in the science which the wisdom of the Church through the ages has accumulated for the guidance of souls. He must be an expert also in the knowledge of human nature, capable of dealing wisely, at any moment when he is wanted, with the deepest needs of men and women. He passes his days among the people of God, in closest touch with all their interests, and yet is detached by the fact of his priesthood from the life of the world. He is called to a specialised practice of prayer. He is one who is expected to know the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God in matters of conscience, whether concerned with the exterior or with

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the interior life. He is the natural person whom his people should consult in all perplexities and difficulties. It is understood that he lives a life of outward and inward self-discipline to which the lay people are not called, and to him are entrusted secrets which the lay people are not expected to know. He lives a double life: on the one hand hid with Christ in God, and on the other feeding his flock. On him has been conferred the greatest honour which can be given to any human being; at the same time he is the servant of the servants of God. He has been prepared for all this, or he should have been prepared for it, by a long course of technical training beginning almost from the time when he was first conscious of his vocation to the priesthood.

2. *Elements of the Priestly Life*.—What then are the chief elements of this priestly life? How is it produced, how is it fostered and kept true? Volumes have been written on the subject. It is only necessary to mention such books as Manning's *Eternal Priesthood*, Newbolt's *Priestly Ideals* and *Priestly Blemishes*, Keating's *The Priest: His Character and Works*. These are books which shame every priest who reads them,

and yet which spur him on to fresh exertions by which he may become more worthy of his great vocation. In so short a book as this it is only possible to indicate briefly some of the chief ways in which a priest strengthens and refreshes his interior life.

(a) First comes the daily offering of the Holy Sacrifice. Each morning the Catholic priest begins his day with his preparation for Mass before entering into the Holy of Holies. The custom by which each priest celebrates daily is sometimes attacked on the ground that it obscures the corporate character of the Eucharist, the ideal being one Mass each day, at which all the faithful, priests and lay people, should be present whether they communicate or not. I am not arguing the theological reasons which have led the Western Church to take the other line; but I would point out that practically it is impossible to keep to the rule of the one daily Mass. In small parishes there is only one priest, and therefore the matter is solved at once; but in large parishes, where there are many priests and a large population, it is necessary both on Sundays and on weekdays that there should be several Masses, at times when people can best come. For instance, on Sundays

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it is exceedingly difficult for the father and mother of a large family, or in many cases for the eldest sister, to be at the same service ; and it is sheer cruelty to bring the children to the eleven-o'clock sung Mass, probably with elaborate music and a long sermon not meant for them, if it is any way possible to have a sung Mass more especially for them. On weekdays there must be a Mass at an early hour suitable for those who have to go to work, and later for the old people and those who cannot rise early ; while mothers can rarely come until the men have gone to work, and the children have been sent to school.

But added to all this is the joy of the priest in beginning his day with the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. It tones all the day and every day of his life. It is very true that we have to set against this the undoubted fact that it does mean expense of nervous energy, and makes self-discipline very necessary if irritability born of weariness is to be overcome. It cannot be doubted that it would be pleasanter, and would make work easier in many ways, if the parish priest could go straight from his bedroom to the breakfast-table ; but that is just where

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the Catholic conception of the Ministry comes in.

It is truly deplorable to hear, as we so often do, of parishes where there are many priests and one daily Mass, to which those who are not themselves celebrating seldom or never come.

(b) The Divine Office. These considerations may seem very elementary to priests who have all their lives been accustomed to the rules which have become so familiar to them. It must be remembered, however, that there are many who do not realise that the Church lays this duty on all priests, not as a counsel of perfection but as a bounden duty. It is, therefore, impossible to omit them in a consideration of practical Catholicism. The Church of England unhesitatingly regards the recitation of the Divine Office as part of the rule of life of every one of her clergy. Some English priests feel themselves bound to the whole of the Divine Office of the Western Church ; others are content to say Morning and Evening Prayer as directed in the Prayer Book. But the principle is the same in both cases, and the effect upon the priestly life is incalculable. The discipline of finding time, of laying aside pressing activities of parochial

work and making a return to the Presence of God cannot be too strongly pressed. Dr Liddon (*The Priest in his Inner Life*) says: "It might be scarcely possible for any man to appreciate the moral result upon his character, which, however delicate and imperceptible, undoubtedly follows upon his carefully complying with or violating an injunction such as that in question. But in the lapse of years who will not see the large and very serious influence which such a habit formed under such a sense of responsibility must of necessity produce upon the life of the soul." And if it be pressed, as it is sometimes by good people holding evangelical views, that there is a danger of the recitation of the Divine Office growing formal, Dr Liddon says again: "It is God's gracious purpose that the soul should be continually approximating to the devotional type which is set for it in the Psalter, and that as it expands with ever-increasing tenderness and awe towards Him who is always its Centre and Sun, it should more and more perfectly appropriate and feel at home with that inspired language in which the saints for three thousand years learnt to know and to love Him."

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But how is this to be effected? We reply at once, by meditation.

(c) Dr Liddon says again that: "Meditation is a duty with which every person who is attempting to lead a religious life is supposed to be familiar. The Bible says so much about it that in a Bible-reading country like ours everybody takes it for granted. But the popular idea of meditation is, we apprehend, as indefinite as it is general. It supposes this at least, that the mind is exercised upon a religious subject, but beyond this it cannot advance. You see a worthy clergyman in his study. He is resting his elbow on the table and reflecting on some portion of his Bible, making remarks at intervals to his wife. This is indeed better than nothing, although it be a feeble and dreamy effort, failing in reverence, in intellectual address, in stimulating the imagination, in opening the soul in very truth to the eye and making it court the grace of its God, in short, failing in all the great purposes of meditation. It fails in these because it fails in system. Meditation to be real must be systematic, and the soul should be taught to move just as systematically and reverently when in the Divine Presence as the body" (Liddon, *op. cit.*, p. 27).

Meditation then is a duty of the priesthood ; but it is far more than a duty ; it is that exercise by which the priest

“ In lonely pureness to the All-pure source
Of Life remounts.”

Father Paul Bull says, speaking of meditation : “ When the soul is waiting upon God with the surrender of the will, the uplifting of the heart and the concentrated attention of the mind, God the Holy Spirit broods over it and communicates what He wills, and beneath His life-giving movement the soul catches the tone of the mind, the heart and the will of God. Thus man is able to think the thoughts of God, to love what He loves, to choose what He wills, to look down upon his work, his life and himself from the point of view of God ” (*Missioners' Handbook*, p. 23).

It is in meditation that the priest works out in his individual life and is able to impart to others, consciously and unconsciously, inexhaustible riches of Divine knowledge and Divine grace which he has found in his Mass and his Office. Here he learns to translate the language of God into the teaching of the practical duties of every day. A persevering

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practice of meditation, facing and overcoming the difficulties, will in time fundamentally change the life of the priest ; while he who gives way, grows weary, and gives up, suffers a loss which is irreparable, and sinks inevitably to a lower level.

3. Let us now consider very briefly the chief duties of a Catholic priest towards the people whom he serves. It will be necessary to deal with the administration of the Sacraments, especially Holy Communion and Penance, in more detail later on, glancing at this point at the more outward side of his activities. How necessary it is that a priest, as well as being a man of God should also be in the truest sense of the word a man of the world, an acute and sympathetic observer of human life, able to deal effectively with the situations brought before him ! “ Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves,” said our Lord to His priests.

Persons who study the view of religion taken in modern fiction will have noticed the respect in which the Catholic priest is held by writers who are not themselves Catholics. Mr Kipling in *Kim* contrasts the kindly acuteness and the unerring success of Father Victor with the hesitating ineffectiveness of Mr

Bennett, the Anglican chaplain. Mr Kipling is very far from being a Catholic propagandist, but he understands well the secrets of real influence.

(a) *Visiting*.—It is a criticism often brought against Catholics in these days by Bishops and others that they do not visit in their parishes, but sit at home and expect their people to come to them. I fear there is, or at least was, some truth in the accusation; if so, it ought at once to be put right by a return to the ideal of regular and systematic visiting. It is probably true that in times not long past a good deal of valuable energy was wasted on the fetish of house-to-house visiting in great parishes. But the determined rule to spend so many hours every day in visiting in his parish is of priceless importance to the English priest. There are enough calls to it, as we all know. Once we begin, the difficulty is not to find out the people to visit, but how to get through the immense number of people we want to see.

(b) *A Priest must avoid Favouritism*.—This may seem almost too elementary to be mentioned. It will not, however, seem so to those who see the innumerable troubles which come about in parishes through unwise

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preferences, and the jealousies which flow from them. It is such a temptation to a priest to go too often to a house where he is welcomed, and where the inmates are attractive, and to avoid those where there is less pleasure to be found. In other cases he bestows all his love on one department of the work or on a few individuals. Or, still worse, he gives way to inordinate affection for one person or another, one of the most fatal traps of the priesthood. It may be that the affection does not amount to serious sin, but it causes untold misery, waste of time, and loss of reputation, and causes many a priest to appear ridiculous, if not blameworthy, in the eyes of his people.

(c) *A Priest must be completely accessible to any of his People at all Times.*—St Ignatius, in his delightful way, says that many of his most gratifying conversions had taken place at unseasonable times. People very soon get to know where they are welcome, and an inaccessible priest quickly falls out of sympathy with his flock. A priest's house should always be constantly and obviously open to his people.

But these considerations bring us at once to a point of acute controversy, which is all

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the more searching because it goes to the foundation of the priestly life. Is the marriage of the clergy compatible with the Catholic ideal of the priesthood, or must priests be celibate? I approach the subject with much trembling, but it must be faced if we are to deal with practical Catholicism, for it is one of the greatest questions of the day. I wish to preserve complete charity and I beg that it may be extended to me; but we must look at the facts as they are, and draw the conclusions which seem most in accordance with Catholic tradition and practice, as well as practically most expedient.

It is impossible to say that marriage of the clergy is unknown in the Catholic Church, for we have the Eastern Orthodox Church not only permitting but ordering the marriage of candidates for the secular priesthood; though it must be remembered that in no case is matrimony allowed to be contracted after ordination. Nor can it be insisted that the marriage of Church of England priests is forbidden, or even discouraged. Whatever differences of interpretation may be put upon some of the Articles, the meaning of the thirty-second is quite unmistakable. Moreover, we live so

much among married priests that if we are to say we will have nothing to do with them we should speedily become a small, exclusive and self-contained sect.

On the other hand, we have the vastly impressive fact that the Church of the West, of which we are historically, geographically and spiritually a part, has for many centuries decided absolutely for a celibate priesthood, except in those few cases in which she has taken over congregations of Orthodox Easterns. Our attraction towards Roman Catholic ideals is inevitably becoming stronger, and there is a large and increasing body of priests and lay people within the Church of England who are enthusiastically in favour of a celibate clergy. There is every sign that this feeling is growing, and very many priests now feel it to be a matter of conscience as well as of practical expediency.

Let us turn now to the practical side. It does not seem to me that it can really be maintained in most cases that a married priest is so accessible as one who is unmarried. It is exceedingly difficult to divide the house, and allot one part to the domestic side of life and the other to the priestly side. In the nature of things a married household must be less

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open to all people at all times than a celibate establishment, for the ordinary man or woman or boy instinctively feels that a greater sense of privacy attaches to the home of a family than to the presbytery.

Again, it is unavoidable and perfectly natural that a wife should endeavour to protect her husband against unseasonable visits and visitors. If the front door bell rings at ten P.M. she will be greatly tempted to be on the alert to see who it is, and if possible to preserve the already weary vicar from further strain. Or it may conceivably happen that when an interesting young man is on the verge of a decision to make his first confession the study door may open and an announcement be made that "it is eleven o'clock"—because "if I do not look in he will never go!" I am fully aware that I shall be violently attacked for saying these things, but I know also quite that such events do not infrequently occur.

Further (and here again I write with difficulty), I am sure it is true that there is a growing desire among the laity for celibate confessors. In a few cases persons may prefer a married priest, but they are becoming fewer, while boys and young men will naturally seek a priest who is likely to be able to understand,

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and feel for them in the special temptations of their life. A more difficult aspect still, which must be touched, for it has a vital bearing on the matter, is connected with deplorable, priestly scandals. It is often said that where you have a married clergy there is less likelihood of scandal than where priests are celibate. But statistics show that at least in England this is not true. It is understating the facts to say that of the lamentable scandals which bring the Church and priesthood into such ill-fame, the majority do not occur in cases of unmarried clergy.

One very practical advantage follows from the understanding that priests do not marry. It makes all the difference in the world to a young priest working in a parish whether he is regarded as a marriageable young man or as a priest. Whatever may be said ideally about the influence of our clergy in keeping in close social touch with their parishioners, it is an immense advantage in the deepest sense when it is known that priests do not marry. All that false sentimentality which is rife amongst us is greatly lessened, and the relation of the youngest priest to his penitents, and the congregation generally, becomes natural and harmless. This state of things, however, is only

too easily upset by certain events which occasionally happen. It should be felt that when once a priest has seen the vision of Catholic priesthood, including the ideal of celibacy, he is bound to be true to it. There are some English priests who have definitely bound themselves by a vow of chastity, thus putting themselves into a position of safety. It is certainly true that in the Catholic party influence is falling into the hands of the celibate priests and an increasing number of churches of the revival are and will be served by them.

4. *Priest and Priest.*—One of the most important results of the revival within the Church of England of a clearer conception of priesthood is seen in the change which has come over the relation between priests working in the same parish. The old position was dominated by the idea of Vicar and Curate, the former being regarded rather as an employer than as a brother priest, and the additional curate occupying an altogether inferior place in the scheme of things. This state of things is still fostered by the attitude of many of the laity, who seem almost universally afflicted with the fell disease of Vicaritis.

Of course there can be only one head of the

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parochial organisation ; otherwise everything would fall into confusion. One person must have the last word and the final responsibility. Legally, too, the vicar and churchwardens have a definite position as custodians of the buildings and the controlling of the finance.

Moreover, in most cases the incumbent is an older and more experienced priest than the assistant clergy, and they will be prepared—unless he is a foolish person or they themselves are wholly unreasonable—to accept his judgment in cases of doubt, and to profit by his longer experience of the priesthood ; though the more this is understood and the less it is talked about the better for both parties.

But when all has been said, a priest is a priest in the Church of God, and all priests are equal in dignity. It is the realisation of this by some of the younger priests and the ignoring of it in practice by many of the older men which has brought about a situation of real danger, which is causing much anxiety to-day. There is discontent among the assistant clergy at the tyranny of vicars, and much complaint by incumbents of the arrogance and insubordination of the curates. This is a difficult problem, but it seems to be soluble.

There are two ways in which an incumbent

may manage his parish. He may choose the autocratic way and say to everyone, "Do this," and expect it to be done without question or explanation. He may make changes in any department of the work on his own initiative, and leave the assistant clergy to find out anyhow that it has been done, or to learn about it for the first time in the house of some prominent lay person. He may take the part of the laity at once in the case of any disagreement between them and his priests. He may be unceasingly interfering with and upsetting their work. The result, if he has assistant clergy of any character or force, is continual ill-feeling, open rebellion or secret disloyalty, together with a continual change of curates. And in the end the incumbent is driven to say, "Obey or go." All this is only too lamentably frequent.

Or he may choose a better way, which does not compromise his right position nor take away the necessary responsibility of the incumbent, but which will make everything go far more happily and smoothly. He may decide to make no change or advance, to start no new scheme in or out of the Church, until he has discussed it with his assistant clergy. Surely no serious man thinks that it derogates

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from his dignity or lowers his prestige to receive suggestions for the modification of old ideas, or the trying of new ones, from his brother priests, or to listen with patience to their grievances. And the second part of this scheme is to leave a man free in his own department. No two men can work exactly in the same way ; you cannot reduce two men's methods to a hidebound uniformity, though countless vicars are trying to do so. When the incumbent has made up his mind that a certain work shall be given to a certain priest he should let him do it, and do it in his own way, so long as it is not a manifest failure. It is intolerable that when an incumbent has handed over an organisation to one of the priests of his parish he should ceaselessly criticise and interfere, and even (as often happens) should be guilty of so ill-mannered an action as to deal with subordinates behind the back of the responsible person.

In many parishes the organist and churchwardens, or the district visitors, have far more real freedom in their departments than the assistant priests in theirs. Of course some men are hopeless ; they have to be under continual supervision, and probably like it ; but many men of character are completely

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disillusioned and their powers are ruined by vicarial tyranny ; while the best work will be got out of a priest by letting him feel he is responsible for his own department, and free to work out his own methods in his own way.

On the other hand, assistant priests must realise that it is their business to meet the incumbents half way in these matters. If it is irritating for a curate to find the vicar springing new ideas on him without consultation, or interfering with work which has been entrusted to him, it is just as irritating for a vicar to find that when his back was turned changes have been quietly edged in by the curates, in the hope that having been made they will be accepted. If there is to be mutual confidence, nothing should be done which has not been discussed in conclave.

It may be objected that all this may take up a good deal of time ; to which I would reply that time could not possibly be better spent. In properly managed parishes the clergy are in close and constant touch with one another, and where trust, confidence and sympathy obtain between the clergy, great things will come to pass in the life of the parish.

CHAPTER III

WORSHIP AT MASS

IT seems clear to-day that almost all parties in the Church of England, even those who once seemed most unlikely, are coming to agree that the Lord's own Service, by whatever name we call it, ought to be the chief act of worship on the Lord's own day. Very different views are taken of the Sacrament and the Sacrifice, and every kind of idea is represented, from a desire for a "bright, musical service" fairly late in the day with a large crowd of communicants—hardly any of whom would be fasting—to the system of an early fasting Communion, followed by a great corporate offering of the Holy Sacrifice at a later hour, at which only the priest communicates.

The movement has its dangers as well as its advantages. It may well lead to the slackening of the ancient rule of fasting Communion. It has been taken, in one parish which I know quite well, as an opportunity for having

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evening Communion every Sunday instead of once in the month, in order to make the Holy Communion the principal service of Sunday. But the principle, however strangely worked out, has come to stay. The report of the Archbishops' Committee on Public Worship unanimously adopted the following statement :—

“ It is almost universally felt that the Communion Service has fallen out of its proper place in the scheme of worship. Church-going has generally come to mean attendance at services such as Matins and Evensong, and the Holy Communion has been driven into the position of an exceptional service, requiring definite convictions and special effort, such as are not to be expected of the average member of the Church. It is clear that this is a serious misfortune.

“ In the first place, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was definitely ordained by Christ, and has therefore a greater claim on the observance of Christians than any other service that can be devised.

“ Secondly, there seems to be no doubt that the Communion Service makes less demand for intellectual effort and satisfies more directly the spiritual impulses than such services as Morning and Evening Prayer.

“ Thirdly, the whole tradition of the Church is in favour of making this service in some way central.”

Moreover, in the report of the chaplain's replies sent from the Front to the Central Council of the National Mission these words occur: “ There is an altogether surprising demand that the Holy Communion should be explicitly treated as the principal service of the Sunday, a demand which often expresses itself in such terms as these: ‘ Restore our Lord's Service to its rightful position as the service for all the baptized to attend.’ ‘ Put the chief service first; men do not come to Communion because they do not understand what it means.’ ” And this demand is very often explicitly stated to be the fruit of the chaplain's own experience of its effect on the men and the expression of reality which it brings. “ The experience of those chaplains, so far as I know, who have brought it before men by making the Lord's service the Parade service, has been that it has made a very extraordinarily deep impression on their minds. There is no need to explain its difference to any other service; they know and feel its divinity as they would know and feel the divinity of our Lord, not by explanation

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but by instinct. It is reality and not High Church bias which makes men prefer the Lord's supper to a service invented three hundred years ago." / So far the chaplain.

There can be no doubt, in spite of the anomalies which, in the present condition of the Church of England, are bound to come, that this general feeling is a hopeful sign of the times. We shall be wise if we try to be patient with aberrations which may occur in this as in so many other moves which are now being made in a Catholic direction. We cannot excuse deviations from Catholic order, but we may well believe that in process of time they will die out, as knowledge of Catholicism becomes not only more widespread but more thoroughly digested.

How is this Change to be accomplished?—The question which is pressing hard on many parish priests who long to carry out the plan of making the Mass the chief Sunday service in their churches is how it is to be done. The average Englishman is so conservative, he has had his Matins for so long, and genuinely loves it so much, with a love perhaps unreasonable, but certainly strong, that he is prepared to resist changes with all his power.

On the other hand, clergy often forget, in

this as in so many other matters, that there are in every congregation, often the very backbone of it, a certain number of men and women who are eager for change and advance. These people are too often forgotten and neglected, even by a priest who is just as anxious for better things as they are ; while it often happens when, after he has hesitated and faltered for years, at last he takes his courage into both hands and acts according to his convictions, the opposition which he so much dreaded is far less than he expected ; he has won an easy victory when he expected a stubborn battle. The reason of this in so many cases is that much of the work has already been done for him by the keen Catholics.

But in the meantime all sorts of compromises are tried, which end by pleasing nobody. A Choral Celebration at the end of Morning Prayer, or Morning Prayer and Litany, from which the majority of the congregation withdraw after the prayer for the Church Militant, is rather depressing. The general impression is that the sung Mass is a voluntary addendum to Morning Prayer, at which only the midday communicants and the ultra-pious persons are present. The arrangement leads nowhere, because the real service for the vast

majority is still Morning Prayer and ante Communion with sermon, while they perfectly easily elude the service they do not like, and therefore never get used to it.

The same thing happens where a Choral Celebration is put on once a month in place of Morning Prayer. Many people simply say : " It is the wrong service this morning," and go to church in the evening instead.

An attempt of a slightly different kind is just now beginning to be made, by which Morning Prayer is so cut about as to be practically unrecognisable, and all the service after the *Benedictus*, which thus becomes the Introit, is omitted. The sung Celebration immediately follows. But this, too, will be found to be a tedious affair. The service will still be far too long ; it will be impossible to perform music which is not very short and elementary, and the whole thing will be an incongruous mixture of two distinct services, which will be disliked both by those who rightly wish to retain Morning Prayer as they know it, and by those who wish for a well-arranged sung Mass.

It seems as if only two plans would work permanently in English parishes. The first is that which is being tried as yet only in a

few places, but which has very much to be said for it, at least in the country. It aims at the provision of a sung Mass with a brief sermon at an hour early enough to ensure fasting communion, and at which most of the communions of the day will be made. The idea is well worked out by Rev. S. M. Cooke, Rector of Belbroughton, in a pamphlet entitled: *Sunday : Some Principles of Reform in Worship and Teaching* (County Express Offices, Stourbridge). Mr Cooke says: " Let the Lord's Day begin in church with a said Matins at say 7.30, at which we might expect the attendance of our present early communicants and those who are prepared to show some sacrifice for the retention of Matins. If, as seems probable, Convocation is going to give us a revised Lectionary before long, we may look for shorter and more appropriate lessons, like the liturgical epistles and gospels. In this case Matins would last twenty minutes or so, and at 7.55 the bell would ring again for the Litany, said or sung in procession as it originally was. At 8.10 the bell would ring again for a simple Choral Celebration interspersed with proper hymns and a five minutes' sermon on some main thought of the gospel. At 9.15

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—earlier if there were sufficient priestly helpers or a permanent diaconate — the congregation would disperse for breakfast, with a real sense of having worshipped and also received strength and the Church's message for the day. A kindly fellowship might be maintained by breakfasting those who come long distances." It will at once be seen that this service provides only a minimum of teaching in a five minutes' sermon. Mr Cooke makes up for this in the following way:—"Considering the crying need for instruction and remembering the popular hour of eleven o'clock, we would follow the lead suggested by some of the Universities and at that hour we would have the special instruction for the day, preceded by an authorised form of the Bidding Prayer, with definite intercessions from the pulpit on the instruction given—instruction and intercessions being carefully thought out and expressed in simple and appealing language."

Some good judges think that this last arrangement would ruin the whole plan; for it will be at least probable that those who have been accustomed all their lives to come to church at eleven o'clock will continue to

do so, and will only occasionally be present at the Holy Eucharist.

Another parish priest of experience expresses himself as being in favour of as late a sung Mass as possible in the country. But, when all has been said, Mr Cooke's is an attractive plan, and the whole pamphlet, with many other suggestions than those which have been outlined, is well worth careful study. Probably in many country parishes, and even in some of the towns, the arrangement might work out well. At least it is an infinite improvement on the present dreary ways of so many Church of England parishes. Mr Cooke has a time-table carefully worked out for the whole of Sunday. It has certainly been proved that under this plan, or something like it, the spiritual life of villages has been wonderfully uplifted and the number of communions greatly increased.

It is very doubtful, however, if the plan would work out satisfactorily in great city parishes. To group together at one service all the communicants at a sung Mass, with ever so short a sermon, would be intolerably long. It would be impossible to sing great music apart from plain-song ; and surely the grand Masses of Palestrina or Beethoven, to

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say nothing of Gounod, are meant to be sung at the Mass and not only in concert halls. Industrial weariness too would make so early an hour too great a strain on tired workers every Sunday.

Moreover, it is only too likely that at present the lovers of the sacred hour of eleven o'clock would still come at that hour and hear the sermon, and reserve their hearing of Mass to those occasional days when they received the Holy Communion. The provision of a slightly later Mass, as Mr Cooke suggests, would be a help to families where someone must always be left at home ; but it seems quite clear that the more normal arrangement at present existing in most Catholic town parishes will go on as it was ; and there seems to be no good reason why both arrangements should not work side by side.

Let the experiment be tried, as it is outlined by Mr Cooke and others, in parishes where it will work. Where it is successful it may well bring about a true revival of Catholicism.

The alternative arrangement is almost too well known to need description ; but I have found strange misconceptions held even by leaders of the evangelical body as to the aims of Catholics in this respect. I have actually

talked to serious men who thought, for instance, that we encouraged our people to come to a sung Eucharist at eleven rather than, or as an alternative to, Communion. Nothing could be further from the truth. In point of fact, it is Catholics, both Roman and English, who are foremost in pressing the duty of frequent and even daily Communion by those who are fit for it. Our aim is to get our people to an early fasting Communion at least every Sunday as they are ready for it, and then for all to unite in a great corporate act of worship, made as attractive as possible by excellent music and dignified ceremonial, at or about eleven o'clock. This really is a convenient time for townspeople on Sunday ; but those who cannot come then may have fulfilled their obligation by receiving Communion and thus being present at Mass, or by being in church at one of the earlier Masses on the same day. But it has been found necessary and highly desirable, where the staff of clergy is large enough, to have two sung Masses on each Sunday—the earlier one, to which children and others would come, would probably be at about nine-thirty. Evangelicals object to this on the ground that they dislike children's Masses ; but there

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is no such thing as a Children's Mass, and it is wrong to give it that name. It may indeed be the service to which the children can most conveniently come, but it is also a great help to mothers and elder sisters who will have to be cooking the dinner at eleven. It is attended, too, by young married people and by boys who want to hear Mass and enjoy a sung service, but who also want their walk or bicycle ride during the best part of their only free day. It is a convenient time too for a few tired people who have been working late on Saturday night to receive their Communion fasting and yet have a good night's rest. Moreover it avoids the cruelty of bringing children to a service which is too musically elaborate for their understanding, too long for their patience and at which they may be subjected to a sermon of twenty minutes or more in length, which is not in the least intended for them. It may be added that in some of our parishes this arrangement is necessary, as it would be impossible to get the congregations at both services into the church at the same time ; there are too many of them !

But whatever may be the hour at which it is most convenient to have the sung Mass

in any parish, there is no doubt at all that where it is done decently and in order it is by far the most attractive service in Christendom. It is the central service both in East and West, unquestioned in its supremacy, and though by force of unhappy custom it has been misunderstood and unpopular in a vast number of English parishes, it must come to its own in time, and must win the hearts of the English people.

Failures.—But why then, it may very properly be asked, does it not appear to attract? Why in so many parishes does it really empty the church instead of filling it? A sympathetic bishop, writing to me the other day from his holiday, which he had spent in visiting various churches, asked why in so many Catholic parishes the congregations were so miserably poor. “Clearly,” he said, “there is something wrong. What is it?”

Let us confine ourselves at present to the consideration of the service itself. Several reasons, such as a resolute hostility on the part of influential persons, or tactless, idle, mad or scandalous clergy, may account for part of the failure; but it seems to be in the manner of presenting the service itself that the real difficulty lies. It is an unfortunate

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fact that a Choral Eucharist can be made, and often is made, almost as dull and uninspiring in its appeal, at least to the uninstructed, as the old-fashioned Morning Prayer. The singing is bad, the ceremonial is slipshod and incorrect ; being often nothing more than a personal choice by the incumbent of such parts of the Catholic ritual as are thought least likely to offend the churchwardens. The whole atmosphere is timid and forlorn. You feel that there is little joy and little edification behind it.

Now all this is perfectly hopeless. Historically the Mass through the ages has grouped round itself a certain palpable atmosphere, produced by conditions to which we shall return a little later in the discussion of ceremonial. When you go to any church where " things are properly done " you find a dignified elation surrounding the Mass ; it is quite indescribable, but it is there, and it is the heritage of the ages. The truth is that the Mass and its historical ceremonial are one thing, and any kind of separation is fatal.

So many English parishes are bound to start afresh in this matter ; and it is a pity that they start with an attenuated and meagre presentation of the Divine Mysteries,

which is not even primitive, and which wholly omits adornments which have been consecrated by ages because "my people are not ready for that yet"! It is sad to see this service set before a handful of people who are there because they are so devout that nothing will keep them away, while the great multitude pass it unheeding.

No; if the change from Morning Prayer to Mass is to be successful, it must be done fearlessly, completely, and without compromise. English people are less likely to be offended when a priest whom they trust does at once and completely what they know he believes to be right than when through a long course of years they are always being faced by alteration after alteration in the one service of all others in which they long for finality and peace, and to which they are bidden to come. When changes are made all at once, in a few months people get used to them, and love the complete service far more than a thing they know to be unfinished and which changes every few months. It has been proved over and over again that a Mass which is celebrated according to the best rules which can be ascertained will in itself do more than anything else to produce that Catholic atmos-

phere in which the Faith flourishes and souls are saved. The names of the outstanding centres of Catholic life in England proclaim this.

Ceremonial.—Englishmen love ceremonial, although it is often regarded as an axiom that they do not. But it is only necessary to remember the crowds of people who come to Catholic churches on great festivals when the “ritual is at its height of gorgeousness,” as the newspapers say, to be convinced of this. And the truth of it is supported by the spectacle of the breathless interest and sympathy felt by the crowds of people who never enter a church, when looking on at one of our great outdoor processions. They will hang flags out of their windows, they will go to immense pains to cover the street with streamers, and woe betide the Protestant objector who tries to make trouble, or the dog who gets in the way. Both are hustled off without ceremony by the inhabitants of the place.

For the faithful Catholic the ceremonial which surrounds the Mass and the other services of Holy Church is unspeakably lovable. In many cases he hardly ever sees fields and woods, mountains and rivers; but the romance which these provide for those more

fortunate persons who can enjoy them, is found by the city-dwelling Catholic in the age-long dignity and beauty of the services of his Church. Ceremonial dramatises religion. Who has not felt when witnessing the great cycle of Holy Week services with understanding that never was the Passion so closely brought home to his heart as now ; and the reason why the Catholic is prepared to fight so tenaciously for what seem to some people frivolous details of ceremonial is that the Mass does for him evidently set forth " the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, the means of grace and the hope of glory." The splendour of the Mass, with its incense, its lights, its music, its vestments, all enshrining and symbolising eternal truth, is to the Catholic a meeting-place of earth and heaven.

But now let us get to detail for a moment. There is an immense amount of unnecessary controversy about the precise form of ceremonial used in the English churches. Some of us prefer the Roman use. It is simple and living, it emphasises our close connection with the rest of the Western Church and leads, even if indirectly, to a deeper longing for unity. It is easily ascertainable, there is no

difficulty in finding out what is correct and what is incorrect, and if we are to have ceremonial at all, it is really important that it should be right and not wrong. Ceremonial is not simply mummary ; it is that symbolism in which the divine truth of the Real Presence has clothed itself, and there is always a good reason why it should be done just in the way it is done and in no other.

On the other hand, some Catholics lay great store by the Sarum or, as it is somewhat loosely called, the English use. The differences in point of fact are slight. Father Adrian Fortescue has told us (*The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy*) how very little the Sarum rite differs from the Roman. It is practically the same, with some small local differences in detail. It is indeed a pity that such a very small matter should be allowed to separate those whose ideals are in most matters identical.

Personally—and here I speak only for myself—if I were to be appointed to a church in which the English use had become familiar and was popular, I should not alter it except in so far as it needed perfecting. I would perfect it and go on with it. But whatever ceremonial we have, at least let it be correct.

It is unfortunately true that underlying many people's love for the English use is a great and illogical hatred of the Roman Church, and the idea that here is something that is distinctly Anglican. This is intolerable. The Catholic Church is one, and however the details of our ceremonial may differ it must never be taken for granted that they imply any differences in faith. The Mass is the same at Rome, at Moscow, at Canterbury ; no difference in ceremonial can make the least difference in the underlying truth.

CHAPTER IV

FREQUENT COMMUNION

ONE of the happiest effects of the revival of religion in England in the last hundred years—and not only in England, but throughout the greater part of the Western Church—has been the much greater frequency with which the faithful have received the Holy Communion. Side by side with this development, as would naturally be expected, has come much growth in devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and a very real improvement in the general level of religious life among those who have remained faithful to the Church. But there has also come with it a gradually widening separation between the spirit of practising Catholic Christians and the indifference of the world. It is to be hoped that in time the grace which must be increasing among the faithful will lead to a great crusade to win back the world for Christ.

In the English Church particularly, though

we have still to deplore backwaters, both in town and country, where Celebrations are infrequent, and religion is slack, yet almost everywhere there are far more frequent Masses, and consequently much more frequent Communion, than in time past. A very short time ago, at a Round Table Conference in the diocese of Birmingham, at which all schools of thought were represented, it was unanimously agreed that the ideal for all Christians was to receive the Holy Communion at least every Sunday ; this was a real sign of advance. At Catholic churches, where there is at least one daily Mass, many devout persons receive Communion once or twice during the week, and some every day.

This, like so many other good things which have tended towards revival of the spiritual life, has come to us in great part from the much abused Roman Church. For many years past she has shown a strong desire that the faithful should receive Communion much oftener than they used to do. Pope Pius the Tenth was unwearied in his anxiety and practical zeal in this great cause, while his predecessor and his successor began and continued the same work. The consequence has been a great revival of piety in Roman

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Catholic countries, where the thronged altars on Sundays and weekdays are much beyond anything that we have yet achieved in England.

This, which is one of the greatest reforms in the Church in modern times, has not been achieved without a good deal of questioning and opposition among ourselves. It has been found rather startling by some people ; it is a novelty, and they are inclined to think it somewhat dangerous. They have been trained in a strict view (probably coloured by Puritan teaching) of the spiritual requirements for the reception of the Holy Communion ; it has been so great a thing that they felt a very long preparation, with only occasional Communion, was demanded by those who would receive it worthily ; and it seems to them that all this insistence on communicating more often is hardly in keeping with the reverence due to so great a Sacrament. They are apt to urge that a much greater holiness of life and freedom from sin is necessary if they are to communicate any oftener than they do. Their faults are so many and so frequent that they feel they are unworthy of so great a gift from our Lord.

Beyond doubt there is underlying all this a

very real sense of reverence and a true feeling of sinfulness, while in many cases the shrinking from frequent Communion is caused by the best motives. Yet the reasoning is at fault ; we ought to see through it and dismiss it for good. It rests upon a misconception of our Lord's purpose in instituting the most Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood ; and if our ideas as to what the Blessed Sacrament demands of us conflict with our Lord's plain intention in giving it to us, there is clearly something wrong. The Catechism tells us that the purpose of the Holy Communion is " the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ . . . which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." Our Lord's object, then, was not chiefly that the honour and reverence due to the Blessed Sacrament should be safeguarded, but that the faithful, through His strength given in it, might receive power to cleanse themselves from the stain of daily sin, and to avoid the graver sins to which we are all prone through our weakness. In fact, we are to receive Communion often that we may be made holier, not to wait until we are holier before we receive it oftener.

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But, it may be asked, what about all those people who, through their weakness, are constantly falling into mortal sin and are most in need of divine grace? Are they to communicate often, in spite of the fact that they sin so frequently? Or must they go to confession before every Communion? This would necessitate very frequent confession, if Communion were to be received at all often. No doubt it is impossible to receive the Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin; St Paul has some terrible words about the unworthy communicant "eating and drinking damnation to himself." But on the other hand, it must be that the person who communicates often will not so easily be overcome by sin, and will be able to keep in grace without having to go to confession before every Communion. There are two conditions for frequent Communion: the one, that the person should be free from conscious, mortal sin which has not been confessed and pardoned; and the other, that the Communion should be made with a right intention—a desire to increase in the knowledge and love of our Lord, or of growth in the spiritual life, or the overcoming of sin, or any other right longing for progress. Of course, the better the prepara-

tion, the more grace we shall get ; if we are free from mortal sin, and trying with our whole heart to battle against temptation, the effect of frequent Communion must be an incalculable growth in the grace of God. It is for these kinds of reasons that in Catholic parishes priests are now directing their penitents, so far as they see them fit, to increase the number of their Communions. The effect is evident, not only in the very large number of Communions made in an ever-increasing number of our churches, often rising to several hundreds between Monday and Saturday, but in the marked deepening of the spirit of reverence and prayer among us. There is no happier effect of the Catholic revival than this.

But there are obviously very real practical difficulties in the way of many of our people. How is it possible for working people, especially men, who have to get to work very early in the morning, to receive Holy Communion on weekdays? Many others are kept at home by household duties, or by sickness; what is to be done? No doubt if the difficulties are real, God will give His grace in other ways to those who truly desire it. Yet surely many who are really in earnest about

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their spiritual life will find a way of overcoming the difficulties. Earlier Masses might do much, and the practice of receiving from the Reserved Sacrament, which will be mentioned later, will obviate many difficulties. But in any case there are very many members of our regular Sunday congregations who are not really kept back by insuperable difficulties, who could and ought to communicate much oftener than they do. The men are specially backward, as is seen by a comparison between the proportion of men to women at Communion on an ordinary Sunday, and the much larger proportion on great festivals; still more by the miserably small numbers on weekdays, which is by no means altogether caused by work. Yet it is in the knowledge of every confessor that men and boys are marvellously helped to overcome inveterate habits of sin, and to increase in grace, by more frequent Communion. What we priests have to remember is that men and boys need to have the suggestion made to them by their director much more than women and girls. It is sometimes necessary to hold back our female penitents in this matter, if we do not think they are ready; it is seldom necessary to do so with men and boys, who need far

more encouragement, and would in most cases never think of it for themselves. Yet I know many of them who have lived to thank God with all their hearts for the frequent Communion which has been their salvation.

For it is the tempted who are so greatly strengthened by this privilege. There are so many souls struggling, earnestly desiring to be pure and holy, and yet in grave danger of growing weary through many falls. But the fact is, they are not using the means of grace ; they communicate so seldom. It is just men and women, boys and girls of this kind who need to keep in the closest possible touch with our Lord. If only we priests would point out to them, more often than we do, that what they need is the continual strengthening and refreshing of their souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, how far stronger and happier they would be ! The practice is one of the most primitive customs of the early Church ; for centuries it fell into almost complete disuse, especially among the lay people ; the restoration of it is the most blessed sign of our times. What we need most in the Church of England to-day is a wise and great extension of the use of frequent Communion by our people.

One last point remains to be touched upon,

which has already been hinted at above. Many parish priests to-day have learned by experience that if we are to provide completely for the spiritual needs of our people, we must be allowed to give Communion to certain of the "whole," as well as the sick, from the Tabernacle, and that on purely utilitarian grounds. Country priests are always telling us that their men cannot possibly get to Communion, except at the rarest intervals, if they are only to receive at the time of Mass. Town priests have exactly the same difficulty with many of their people, such as milkmen, postmen and postwomen and others. Are these people, many of whom are earnestly willing to be regular communicants, to be deprived of their Communions when it is always possible for them to have it from the Tabernacle? Is it too much to ask our Bishops to allow us to give these Christian souls the Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament? For many of them it is the only way they can receive, at any rate at all frequently. Surely the love of Christ constraineth us.

CHAPTER V

THE TRAINING OF THE CHILDREN

THE aim of the Catholic Church and her ministers in the fulfilment of their duty towards her children in any parish is to provide them with an efficient and properly graduated course of training in divine truth and the practice of religion, such as will not only bring them to God in the life of devotion, but will also make them agents for the spread of the kingdom wherever their future life may be lived. This training ought to start from earliest infancy, beginning with baptism, and should go on in an unbroken course until, and long after, they are grown men and women. Our present task is to deal with their teaching in childhood and youth ; when they are grown up other arrangements have to be made, which are discussed elsewhere in this book.

No time need be wasted in impressing the importance of this part of the work of a Catholic parish, though even now it seems not

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to be understood that the children's work needs the best labours of the most competent people who can be found to undertake it, and never ought to be regarded as that part of the parochial organisation which can be handed over to the youngest deacon, or to some priest who is already overburdened with other responsibilities. The evil results of carelessness in the past are expressed in burning words by the chaplains in their report to the National Mission Council. They tell us some startling things. "The Church in the army has to receive the men in the spiritual state in which the Church in civil life sends them, and on the latter must rest the responsibility for defective knowledge," says one. Others say that the cause of the abysmal ignorance, even of the facts of our Lord's life, of vast numbers of our soldiers is "lack of dogmatic teaching." "Because the Church has not taught them." "Lack of definite and simple teaching; we have exhorted too much and taught too little." "Instruction in religious doctrine unaccompanied by training in religious habits" is a telling phrase. Or, again: "There is too great a diversity of teaching and practice in the Church of England, and men find it difficult to know for what Anglicanism

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stands." "The facts are an appalling commentary on the inefficiency of our Sunday schools." "Bad, unsystematic teaching in the Sunday schools." "Obviously the reason why ninety per cent. of the men know nothing of the Catholic religion is because either they've never been to the Sunday school or else because the Sunday school failed to teach them anything. That seems to be one of the chief lessons of the war: the need for Sunday schools and good Sunday school teachers, and a more definite Catholicism to be taught in them."

These are some of the criticisms of men who really do know the facts, on our system of religious instruction; they are a trumpet call to us to put away our sloth and to set up immediately an efficient method of teaching our boys and girls. But every parish priest is bitterly conscious of the results of past negligence in the training of souls in his parish. What of the future? Is this terrible state of things to continue?

It is true that great improvements have already been made in many parishes; the sense of the need; shame for past neglect; the healthy though depressing competition between the efficiency of the day schools and

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our own feeble efforts on Sunday ; all this has aroused us to fresh exertions, but a vast amount of shocking and unrecognised inefficiency still remains. This chapter is therefore a humble attempt to sketch an ideal of the proper performance of the Church's duty to her children.

1. *The Day Schools*

I shall not write much about the day schools, which happily so many of our parishes still retain ; not because they are unimportant, for they ought to be, and can be made, an integral part of the Church's method of the training of her children in the faith, but because the clergy are not directly responsible for the management of this part of the work ; yet neglect of the day schools by priests who seldom or never teach in them is deplorable ; and the only too common mistrust and quarrelling between the parish priest and the teachers is a fruitful cause of alienation between the clergy and the children. If there is one person in the parish with whom the priest should be in close and cordial touch, it is the schoolmaster, whose position is rightly a most responsible and influential one.

On the other hand, it is unnecessary to

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emphasise the truly happy results of a cordial understanding between church and school ; where the teachers are Catholics—and we would there were more such than there are—their help and influence are of priceless use to the Church in every sort of way ; the teachers support the clergy, and the clergy help the teachers, while both have the same aim for the children.

But, after all, the day school runs itself efficiently, maintained largely by other forces than those we bring to bear ; Government regulations and inspection and Government grants are not to be despised, and though often it is difficult to get just the teachers we want, a wise and watchful parish priest can do much to ensure that the religious teaching given in the day school is Catholic. We may well be thankful that we are relieved from the burden of responsibility for secular instruction ; while a priest who wishes to use every means of influence over his children will do all in his power to keep in the closest touch with his day schools.

2. The Sunday School

The Sunday school, by whatever name we call it, is our real problem, and the one for

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which the clergy are finally responsible. In this department there is no compulsion, no inspection, no Government grants, and few skilled teachers; many parishes have not even a decent building in which to hold the Sunday school; the Sunday work with the children is purely voluntary in all its parts, and is under the sole charge of the parish priest, with such helpers as he can get. And it is an unhappy fact that in numberless parishes the Sunday teaching and discipline are beyond all comparison behind the day schools. Order and efficiency, often even careful teaching, hardly exist, and the children, who are quick to compare, are forced to contrast the order and discipline of their weekday teaching with the loud chaos in which they learn their religion on Sunday. To this day, in only too many parishes, it is possible to find a weary and dejected clergyman, already worn out by a day's work, and perhaps with little faculty for teaching children at the best of times, struggling to impart Catholic doctrine to an unmanageable mob of boys and girls ranging between the ages of eighteen and six years. The more virtuous children have sunk into a quiet apathy, while the livelier spirits are becoming more and more riotous every

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moment. Often the teacher seems to be oblivious of both these facts, and goes on talking, regardless of the noise and tumult; and this affair is too often dignified by the name of "The Catechism," and is so advertised in the parish magazine and on the notice-board of the church.

Or there is the equally pitiful companion picture of a large tin building, stuffy, without divisions and ill-ventilated, in which fifteen or more devout but untrained young men and women, themselves very often, through no fault of their own, rather hazy in their views of the Catholic faith, are teaching pretty much whatever comes into their heads to such of their scholars as are doing them the kindness of listening to them. I do not want to belittle the devotion which leads many a young man or woman, who would love to be, and ought to be, out in the fresh air on their only free day, to give themselves so generously to a work which is too difficult for them; they ought not to be asked to do it unless they are trained to the work. I do not think the pictures I have drawn are at all exaggerated; indeed, I have myself witnessed scenes of this kind in more than one place. But can anyone be surprised if boys and girls,

when they come to the age of fourteen, and are no longer subject to much discipline—as in all working-class parishes they are not after they begin work—should drift away from Sunday school? The vast majority of children love discipline and order, and hate and despise disorder, even when they are producing it themselves. And it is not only that they dislike it at the time; it fills them with a contempt for the Church and its works which may last for a lifetime.

What is to be done then? Very many priests feel conscious that they are not at their best with children, and that they have not trained Sunday school teachers to undertake the work for them; but they can see no way out of the difficulty. Better things, however, are being done in an ever-increasing number of parishes, and the outlook is already much brighter than it was. A great part of this improvement is owing to the development in English parishes of the St Sulpice Method of the Catechism; this is so well known to many people that I have some hesitation in writing about it; and yet there are so many places in which it is unknown, or not understood, that it may be well to give a brief outline of a system which

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with minor differences is being very widely adopted.

The system begins at the beginning of life. Communicant godparents should see that the infant be brought "so soon as he shall be able to learn" to the Infants' Sunday School. This should be altogether separate from the work with the older children, and should be under the entire control of some one person, (almost certainly a woman), and the best-trained women teachers who can be got. In the Infants' Sunday School I know best there is a large number of small classes, all under the close supervision of the superintendent, who should not have a class of her own. I believe the Child-Garden method can be very well used on Sundays, though I have little personal knowledge of its working. Detail is unnecessary, and would be wearisome at this point; but it is very important that the superintendent should be let alone entirely to work out the school in her own way, unless she is an open and manifest failure; a grown man, even if he be a clergyman, is seldom at his best when interfering with the technicalities of infant education.

At seven or eight the children pass into the Little Catechism. If this can be managed

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by one of the clergy, assisted by a keen body of lay people as assistants, where the staff is large enough, so much the better ; for he is the right person to do it, unless he is quite useless with children. If a priest cannot be had, then one good teacher who is accustomed to children, and who can teach and keep order, is far better than fifteen or more inefficient ones with separate classes ; the one catechist would then do all the teaching, unless the circumstances were very happy and there were another person competent to take on part of the work. The Little Catechism should meet in its own building ; if it can be a mission church or a light and well-ventilated school, so much the better. In any case, the building should be made as beautiful and attractive as possible ; much may be done by the use of pictures, images, candles and the rest, which ought to be the property of the Catechism and cared for by appointed children. Abundant time and love must be given to the Little Catechism, if it is to fill properly its very important place between the Infants' School and the Great Catechism.

When the boys and girls are eleven or twelve, as may seem best, they are transferred

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into the Great Catechism, which is held every Sunday afternoon in church.

Dupanloup recommends that the Catechism should have its own chapel, separated from the rest of the church, where everything is its own possession, and seating is so managed as to ensure that every child can see and be seen, and can hear perfectly. This may have been possible in France in the eighteenth century, and it would indeed be a happiness if it were possible in England in the twentieth, but there are few of us who have any such privileges. One of the greatest trials of the Catechism is that it has to be held in the ordinary parish church, where there are disadvantages of all kinds, and which seems to have been built without any thought of the teaching of the children. But then, we have to do the best we can with the "plant" we have.

The Great Catechism should be managed by that one of the priests, if there is a staff, who is most competent for it, and who can give the largest amount of time. This is absolutely necessary if all is to go on well. A young man is generally best for the work; but he must have had some training under a more experienced priest before he begins for

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himself ; it is grossly unfair to give a young deacon just ordained the difficult and responsible work with the children. It may be objected that this is rather Utopian ; that where there is only one priest, for instance, or where there is a quite insufficient staff for the labours of the parish, the Catechism must take its chance with the rest, and that we can only do what is possible. Yes ; but let us remember that the Great Catechism is the prize work of the parish ; happy is he to whose lot it falls. I believe that everything else ought to make way for it, and that it should have the place of honour among all the organisations. It cannot be undertaken—except in case of utter necessity—by a priest who is so burdened with other responsibilities, which no one else can undertake, that he is unable to give of his best to the Catechism. I shall never as long as I live forget the terrible day when this truth first forced itself on my unwilling mind ; but the Catechism has profited by my great renunciation.

The catechist, then, must have plenty of time and energy to give to the Catechism. The preparation for it alone is a matter requiring long and abundant care if it is to

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be faithfully done ; the priest who at two-fifteen on Sunday afternoon begins to ask himself : “ What shall I talk to the children about this afternoon ? ” is not only careless ; he is a criminal. His unprepared, and therefore dull and slipshod, instruction is not merely uninteresting to the children at the moment ; a long course of that kind of thing drives them from the Catechism, and from the Church of God. It would often be well for a priest to ask himself when he sees the attention of his children chronically wandering, and the Catechism decreasing in numbers, how long he takes to prepare his Sunday afternoon work, and when he begins it. In every well-ordered Catechism the whole course of instruction is thought out, and possibly printed, for three years in advance, so that the catechist could tell you exactly what he will be saying to his children this day two years, if he is alive then !

Again, our teaching of the children should be crisp, and carefully thought out ; it is depressing to hear a good priest delivering a sermon which is more worthy of the university pulpit to a church full of inattentive children. Our grown-up congregations are polite enough to listen to our dullest

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sermons, but the children, perhaps mercifully, have no such consideration for our feelings. The catechist who has to be continually calling to order, and asking for attention to be given to what he is saying, must blame himself, and not say wearily that "our children are so ill-behaved!"

As to the technical working of the Catechism—the questioning, instruction and homily; the writing of the analysis; the ordered system of officers, and all the admirably thought-out organisation which distinguishes efficient Sunday teaching under the Method of St Sulpice—there is no reason to write here. Abundance of good books can easily be got on the subject; but no catechist can afford to leave unread that most touching and delightful of all books ever written by a lover of children, Dupanloup's *Ministry of Catechising*. The burning love for the work and the children which fill every page of it have revolutionised the ideas of many of us about the teaching of children, and inspired us to a greater care and a fuller sense of our great responsibility. Mr Newland Smith's *Catechist's Handbook* is very useful, and contains a bibliography; and there are countless others. But the best way by far to learn

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the Method of the Catechism is to work in it first of all under some experienced catechist ; or, if that cannot be, to go and listen to some Catechism in another parish. The time will be well spent.

A word must be said here about the inveterate tendency of English people, especially clergy, to compromise, and to select some parts of a given system and neglect the rest. Some years ago a series of articles appeared in *The Church Times* on "Half-Baked Catechisms"—those ones, in fact, which were like volumes of selections from the Method, and not the Method itself. It was truly pointed out that great harm was done to the Method through the practice of calling these forms of children's service "The Catechism" (which is a technical term in this sense), and then saying that it was "not a success." It must be remembered that since the days of Bishop Dupanloup the Method has been worked out in every detail, and with great success. If we really want to prove it we must work it out in its entirety ; not saying, for instance : "An hour is too long ; we will leave out the homily" ; or "Of course we can never get our children to take notes and write an analysis ; it isn't possible,"

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and so on. It has been found that only where the whole Method is used do the happy results which are claimed for it really come about. When we make up our minds that this is so, and act upon our conclusions, we often find that our children have many more possibilities in them than we had imagined.

An experiment now being tried is a continuation of the Catechism in a somewhat new way. Instead of keeping the children and young people indefinitely in the Great Catechism, a continuation Catechism has been formed, into which they pass at seventeen or eighteen, and where the same course of teaching, only on a higher level, still goes on. It is found that the older boys and their girls like to come together to something of this kind rather than to be segregated into classes for young men and young women when they leave the Catechism. A suitable building is needed, as the church is generally used by the Great Catechism on Sunday afternoons at the only time when it would be possible to carry on on this system. But given a competent instructor, a warm and attractive building, and the good will of the young people, it looks as if this arrangement might be a real improvement on our not very

satisfactory Bible Class system, by which at present we provide for the people who leave the Catechism.

Nothing can be said too strongly of the outstanding importance of our work with the children; the Catechism efficiently worked is a means not merely of teaching them the faith and practice of the Church, but of winning them, when they are still young, for our Lord. We do not aim at bringing them into a system; we want to bring them to God by teaching them about Him in as dignified, orderly and attractive a manner as we can. The holiest priest may fail to do this if his method is disorderly and incompetent, while a man of much less power may so use it as to gain the object we all desire.

3. *Advantages of the Method*

It will be well to finish this chapter by summarising briefly some of the chief merits which distinguish the method of conducting our Sunday work with the children which we have been outlining, in contrast with older ways of doing it.

(a) The Catechism provides much more than a mere course of instruction given

Sunday by Sunday ; it is a real spiritual home for the children. For the time, the whole of the church belongs to them. If it is a festival, the banners are their own banners, and the servers are chosen from among themselves. At ordinary times they are surrounded by Catechism properties. The Catechism feels not that it belongs to the church, but that the church belongs to it. And this spiritual home is a permanent one ; how many clergy complain that they lose nearly all their boys and girls at the age of fourteen, or thereabouts, when they leave school. But this sad event is often the effect of a blunder, as it seems to many of us. It appears to be regarded as an axiom that, when boys and girls leave the day school, their first desire is to get away from the company of the other children on Sundays as well ; they are said to consider themselves as grown up, and therefore must at once be transferred to a " Bible Class." My experience with the Catechism has brought me to an altogether different conclusion. I have found that what my growing children need at the period of leaving school is not *change* in their religious surroundings, but *continuity*. All their old landmarks are disappearing ; the day school,

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which they really loved, if it is at all a happy one, is lost, and they are thrown into factory or office life ; even their relation with their home and parents has changed, for a wage-earner is a very different person from a child at school ; all is becoming different in their lives, and the one thing which ought to go on unchanged is religion. I have found that the sense of an abiding place in all the changes which come to our children when they leave school is exceedingly valuable, and is one of the strongest points in the Method of the Catechism.

(b) The Catechism provides the elder boys and girls with a real share in the government. The system of officers—assistants, intendants, monitors, heads of rows, call them what you will—corresponds to a foundation instinct of human life at all ages, but especially at that which we are now considering. They feel that they are not there merely to be taught, but that the whole thing needs them, and could not go on without them : a feeling which is perfectly true of a well-worked Catechism. They have their definite part in the management, as the catechist has his. If they are absent, they know that there will be an important place markedly empty, and a bit

of duty left undone. It is not an easy work for boys and girls of fifteen and sixteen to see that smaller children behave themselves, but it can be and is done ; a head of a row who makes himself felt, and is the friend and helper of the younger ones, is being himself trained very soundly for the work of influence in after life. It is not uncommon, for instance, for the elder boys or girls to have smaller people to their own houses to help them with their analysis, or some other part of their work ; the effect on both need not be further emphasised.

It has been my experience of sixteen years as a catechist that of all the children the most regular and punctual have always been the older ones ; whoever might be away, the monitors were in their places. I attribute the fact that this was so at an age when we hear of so many defections, to the real responsibility for the working of the Catechism which was given them. They felt that they were there to help both the catechist and the children committed to their own care.

(c) The Method is an enormous help to the priest who acts as catechist. He may perhaps not be naturally a children's man ; often there is not a company of priests from whom

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to choose the best who can be had ; often an incumbent who is by himself just has to do the best he can. But it makes all the difference if he is supported by an orderly system with rules and method ; to know beforehand what he is going to teach and when he is going to teach it ; to be encouraged to take time and the utmost care in preparation, and to feel that there is a well-thought-out, scientific, psychological theory behind the practice of it all. Thus a young priest is not cast into a welter of children's work to sink or swim as he may, nor asked to control and teach a churchful of boys and girls of all ages without an idea how he is to do it ; he is supported and directed by the machine, and a priest of any power will soon find himself moving easily and happily in it and forming his own plans for the work ; while a man who had thought that he had no gift for children will find that he is doing far better than he could have believed possible.

(d) There is no segregation into sexes in the Catechism. I do not know very much how the plan for mixed day schools is going on, but I am quite sure that the natural mixing up of boys and girls in the Catechism during the years when they are growing up is of immense

value. The atmosphere is good, with the Church behind them all the time ; they get to know one another while coming in and going out, and each likes to feel that the other is there. It is not so much that any one boy comes to see any one girl, or the other way about, as that the girls like the general feeling that the boys are there, and the boys feel much the same about the girls. They could not explain it, but it is an undoubted fact that it is healthy for the children to be together in this way, and prevents a great deal of the silly giggling or sickly sentimentality which comes about if boys and girls are separated at fourteen. I am sure that if the idea of continuation Catechisms should be at all generally taken up, they will still further extend the advantages we are considering. Moreover, it is much to be desired that our young people should pair off together for life ; no doubt some young men and women are meant by God to save their wife or their husband, by converting them to the faith from a life of carelessness or sin ; but those who have experience know how happy are those marriages which come about between young people who have been brought up in the same church and in the same spiritual atmosphere.

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For this reason the social side of the Catechism should not be forgotten. A tea for the heads of rows occasionally, say at the beginning of the autumn session, or about Christmas time, on a Sunday after the Catechism, is delightful in itself and brings the elder boys and girls together ; while a properly managed dancing-class, under the care of the Catechist or some other priest, with a few well-chosen ladies to help him, is another admirable bit of the social side of the Catechism.

Discipline and order without stiffness ; a well-graduated and intelligent course of instruction in the faith, with the object always of winning our children, not to a system nor to ourselves, but to God ; much prayer and careful preparation by the catechists ; these are the ideals of a good Catechism. Much is being done already, and much more will be done by an extension of the Method (whole and entire) in English parishes.

CHAPTER VI

PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENTS

IN the chapter on the work with children only a slight mention was made of that time of crisis in their lives when they are preparing to receive the Sacraments of the Church, for I felt it was necessary to give it a special chapter to itself. In reality, as every priest realises, all the teaching and care which are given in the earliest years are looking forward towards the Sacraments and are the remote preparation for them ; and all that follows is devoted to the preserving and strengthening of the soul in sacramental grace. For a few weeks an intense effort is made to win the will for God, that it may be consecrated to Him in the Sacraments.

And here I would humbly suggest that a great idea is lost in our ordinary way of speaking of this time in our children's lives. The notice annually given out is generally something of this kind : " The Bishop of the

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Diocese will give Confirmation in this church on such and such a date. All who wish to be prepared for Confirmation should give in their names to one of the clergy as soon as possible." The impression produced is that Confirmation is everything, and that there is nothing of much importance to follow. It is true that some of our candidates may already be communicants, and may long ago have made their first confession, but for the great majority the preparation is for Confirmation and First Communion; and an important point is emphasised if that is made clear, both in giving the introductory notice and in asking prayers for the candidates Sunday by Sunday. For many, perhaps most, of the candidates in the great majority of Catholic parishes there is also the First Confession to be considered, so that normally the three Sacraments will go together.

It is hardly necessary to say much of the greatness of this crisis in the lives of our boys and girls, nor to dwell upon the profound sense of responsibility with which any serious priest must approach the time of preparation. It is enough for us to carry our own memories back to the time when, however imperfectly as it seems to us now, we were ourselves

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prepared for the Sacraments, to find that these are marked days which stand out in the past and which we can never forget.

Those of our children who have grown up in the Catechism are at an immense advantage when compared with those who come to us "in the rough." In the one case it is simply a matter of putting the finishing touches to a work of years ; in the other it necessitates the difficult task of breaking up the fallow ground before the seed can be sown.

1. *The Right Age for Confirmation*.—And this brings us naturally to the great question as to the best age for preparation for the Sacraments. We must tell the oft-told tale again, which is being debated everywhere in these days. It may seem hardly necessary to go into it all again, especially when the matter has been so ably dealt with by Father Baverstock in his book on *The Right Age for Confirmation* ; but it is a fact of the very greatest importance ; it is one of the corner-stones of all our methods of work with children, and the conclusions at which Catholics have arrived are not yet by any means universally accepted by our Bishops.

What, then, is the best age for Confirmation ?

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Most priests will agree, I do not doubt, that some of their best candidates have been boys and girls, especially boys, between the ages of sixteen and twenty. They are then still in the impressible period of life when new ideas are easily assimilated and ideals are formed. At the same time they have some experience of life, they know something of what the fiercer forms of temptation can be, and they are therefore more likely to be convinced of the need and efficacy of Divine grace. We all remember delightful young people of this kind who have drunk in Catholic teaching with a glorious inebriation. At this age they very often come forward for the Sacraments of their own free will, and give in their names themselves because they have decided, not merely that it is the conventional thing, but that it is what they want.

Shall we do wisely, then, to leave our young people until this age before encouraging them to come to the Sacraments? I think not; and I will try to put forward a few of the considerations which have led me, and are leading a growing number of priests, to press for a time of preparation much earlier in life.

Dr Starbuck, in a book called *The*

Psychology of Religion (Scott Publishing Co. Ltd.), which ought to be read by every priest, analyses and supports by statistics with the greatest possible care the connection between adolescence and conversion; how they condition one another, and what is the time when the boy or girl is most open to spiritual influences and when spiritual crises of profound importance are most likely to take place. It is impossible, in so short a space, to make lengthy quotations from Dr Starbuck, but we may summarise his conclusions. He places the years of special sensitiveness to spiritual things, when conversion is likely to take place, between the ages, roughly, of seven and twenty, though he does not exclude the possibility of such an occurrence after or even before that period of life. He shows that for a certain number of years the likelihood of conversion increases in boys and girls, but that there is in both cases a sudden drop when the acute age of adolescence is reached. As soon as this is past the number of conversions runs up again and becomes very frequent just after this period. He reaches the conclusion that "spiritual and physical aspects of development in individual instances tend to supplement one another." And, again: "Conversion and

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puberty tend to supplement one another in time rather than to coincide."

Thus he sets out in a table the fact that in the case of girls he has records of twenty-eight cases of conversion before puberty and sixty-one afterwards and only sixteen during the period. In the case of boys the figures are more remarkable still ; there are twenty-nine cases of conversion before puberty and fifty-four afterwards and only nine at the same time. These are merely the salient facts which come out of Dr Starbuck's researches ; the whole book should be carefully read. He does not write from a Catholic, possibly hardly from a very orthodox Christian, standpoint, but in psychology as applied to religion we can learn from him scientific facts of enormous value.

What it all comes to is that we shall do wisely if, in preparing our children for the Sacraments, we avoid those years in which the greatest physical changes are taking place. Unconsciously, the boy or girl is taken up with other things. The strain on the body caused by the fact of the development of life affects the spiritual powers and makes them less easy to reach and touch. During these years there is much less susceptibility to the ideas we are

trying to impart than either before or after. And yet this is the time fixed upon by so many bishops and chosen by so many priests in the Church of England for Confirmation and First Communion. In another chapter a distinction has been drawn between those of our candidates who are quick, bright, and receptive and the others who are dull and unresponsive. No doubt in many cases this is due to the permanent weakness of the religious instinct, but in others the listlessness and apathy we deplore may well be owing to physical causes which will pass away. The child is at the worst possible time for the preparation for the Sacraments between thirteen and sixteen.

Let us return, then, to practical considerations. It has been pointed out, and the fact is supported by Dr Starbuck's statistics, that boys and girls are particularly spiritually receptive between the ages of sixteen and twenty; and it may be, and often is, urged that for this reason we shall do well to wait until then before approaching them about the Sacraments. But here a difficulty arises at once in connection with the peculiar circumstances of English life in these days. Comparatively few boys and girls between the ages of sixteen and twenty are willing to present

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themselves as candidates, because they are not brave enough or spiritual enough to go against public opinion. I am writing now of the poorer classes. Among the richer boys and girls some strength of mind is needed to avoid being confirmed. But it is an ascertained fact that among the poorer classes young people between sixteen and twenty who are willing to be confirmed are the few, and the great majority, even among those who have real spiritual instincts, hold back for one reason or another. The fear of committing themselves to something which may prove too wonderful and excellent for them ; the shyness of putting themselves under the personal instruction of the priest ; the general indifference, if not hostility, to religion in their place of work, and the fact that in so many cases they would have to bear contumely and contempt, and that they may have to make a stand against the very sins of which they are themselves partakers, and to face all the opprobrium which follows a conversion ; all these and many other considerations deter innumerable young people from coming forward for the Sacraments when they are older.

What is to be done ? Are we to fall back again on the difficult stages of adolescence,

which are clearly the wrong time of life, or is there some other way out of the difficulty? It is true, according to Dr Starbuck, that the cases of conversion before puberty, in the case of both sexes, are not so many as afterwards; but they are very numerous, and all the indications point to the wisdom of getting our children confirmed and put on the road of the communicant life when they are young. This point is being urged more and more strongly by a growing number of priests who have made a careful study of the theories, and have compared them with the facts of their own experience. The position is enormously strengthened by the condition of the public school and industrial life in the nation. The boy or girl in the richer classes goes from the preparatory to the public school at about fourteen. The child of the poorer classes leaves school and goes to work at the same age. In both cases the move is all-important. The child is being taken away from a more or less sheltered atmosphere to one in which there is no shelter at all. Full knowledge of good and evil must come to all of us sooner or later, but anyone who knows the life of our public schools and the atmosphere of factories is aware that, whatever a boy or girl may not know before-

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hand, there is nothing they will not know before they have been a month at either establishment. Temptation of every kind will be brought to bear upon them, and in a great number of cases the most sacred matters will be discussed with a brutal frankness which may well coarsen even a refined child.

There is only one real help here. It has been found over and over again that good breeding, good advice and the best of homes cannot preserve boys and girls in the dangers of such surroundings ; but those who have experience of the grace of God as given in the Sacraments know what is continually done in the lives of these most precious boys and girls. Regular confession and Communion are the only true safeguards. It is not only, though greatest of all, the actual Divine strength given in the Sacraments, but also the very atmosphere which is produced in the life by the frequenting of them. The English boy or girl is generally honest enough to feel that the reception of the Sacraments does place upon them a responsibility for making the best fight they can for what is right and true ; and that even if the struggle is fierce and bitter it must be made by those who are openly professing the Christian life. Yet it must be pointed out

that Communion itself, separated from confession, often proves not to be enough for so difficult a time of life. It is not that boys and girls mean to make sacrilegious Communions, but that their sense of sin has not been deepened, as it must be, by devout and regular confession. I fear it is true to say that great numbers of English boys and girls every year are confirmed and receive their First Communion and afterwards communicate regularly while actually in the grip of habitual mortal sin, which, in most cases, nothing but a full confession and absolution with careful direction can enable them to overcome. The deplorable carelessness of many priests in preparing their candidates for the Sacraments leaves them in complete ignorance of the deepest part of the lives of the boys and girls with whom they deal. Most happily the recognition of the power of confession in cleansing the lives and stiffening the will of growing boys and girls is increasing fast, even in quarters which once seemed the least impressible. The effect on the young life of England, which only too commonly is still sadly tainted, as so many schoolmasters and priests know well, will be incalculable, if only the habit of regular confession makes way.

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But does not all this bear out the argument for putting the preparation for, and the reception of, the Sacraments at an earlier age than has been the rule for so long? Let us take the case, which is so familiar to every priest, of the boy who, with all sorts of good qualities, has got his life into a mess. If he is still young when the battle against sin really begins, it will be incalculably easier to win, since the bad habit is only of short duration; but leave him till he is older, and the sin has gripped him hard, and the struggle will be longer and far more difficult, if indeed he does not give up hope altogether. While, better still, if he makes his first confession when still in a state of comparative innocence his confessions will be in themselves an incentive to avoid temptation when it comes; and a wise director will have prepared him, probably without the boy's own knowledge, for the time of storm and stress. On the other hand, every experienced priest knows of those cases in which, through the wickedness of a bad companion, or his own weakness, a boy who is already accustomed to make his confession falls into really serious sin for the first time. His next confession brings him up short; the gravity of the

matter is at once pointed out to him (for very often it is not fully realised) and there is the greatest hope that such a thing will never happen again.

The subject is endless, and of paramount importance and interest in the practical working out of the Catholic faith. People may say what they like about the sturdy independence of the British character, but serious men and women of all kinds, whether Christian priests or non-Christian social reformers, are coming to see the necessity for young people of an influence, which is most successfully exerted by the director of souls. Direction may not be a necessary part of the sacramental system, but in actual working it is one of the most vital spiritual and social powers in the world. If all this sacramental and priestly help is to be as effective as possible, it must be first exerted early in the life of the boy or girl. We must start our children on the difficult way of public school or factory life strengthened by the regular use of the Sacraments and guided through their confessor and director by the tender wisdom which the Holy Spirit through nearly two thousand years has taught to His Church.

2. *The Aim of the Instructions.*—A word

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may be said here about the aim of instruction for the Sacraments. This is just one of those elementary points of method which are not always thought out so clearly as they should be by those who are responsible for the training of the young. What is the object of our Confirmation instructions? What effect are we trying, under God, to produce on these people, old or young? My mind goes back some years to the time when I first read that most illuminating book, *Pastors and Teachers*, by the present Bishop of Manchester. There are many admirable and most helpful ideas in the book, but one has never left my memory and I think has revolutionised my view of my Confirmation classes. I have not the book by me, and cannot be sure that I am quoting the Bishop's words correctly, but the gist of them is that "the aim of Confirmation Instructions is Conversion." Yet how many of us priests set to work each year on this great period with that thought in our minds?

Yet it corresponds exactly with what Dr Starbuck says in the book to which reference has already been made. The time of all times in life when conversion is to be expected is just at the period when we have our boys

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and girls especially in our spiritual charge. And yet the preparation which we so often give consists of far too lengthy addresses, rather of the nature of a Bampton Lecture than an instruction aiming at conversion. Instruction indeed it must be, but instruction can be given in such widely different ways as to produce very different effects. Is it too much to say that we sometimes weary our candidates by the dryness of our teaching? If only we could give our instruction in a bright, crisp, homiletic manner which would hold the attention and reach the heart! What we want to put before our children is the claim of God upon them, the attractiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Catholic faith and the Christian life. We want to lead them to a decision that they will serve God and keep true to their Christian calling. Any priest of experience knows well that many children are capable of a real conversion which will permanently affect their life. The result of a loving, bright, appealing series of instructions, followed by a careful self-examination in which the best possible help is given; then the first confession and the Confirmation, followed by the solemnity of the First Communion—all these will produce

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an impression on a child, or young man or woman, which can never be forgotten. Steadfastness in after life or a return to right paths after failure can be traced over and over again to systematic and tender preparation for the Sacraments.

A word may be said here about the place and length of Confirmation instructions. As to the first, it is my experience that boys love to come to the priest's own house. A bare and untidy parish-room, or a cheerless and formal class-room in the day school, inspires neither teacher nor taught; but a pleasant, brightly lighted room with a warm fire, round which—if there are not too many—the boys can sit, while their instructor sits among them, impresses the minds of the children with a sense of homeliness and unwonted peace which does great good. It is a help, if it can be done, to take the boys either individually or in twos and threes. I often sigh for the spacious days at St Thomas', Oxford, when it was possible to have them one by one. Often this cannot be; but still, the smaller the class the better. It is easier to hold the attention of all, and the shyness of the private interviews which must come before confession has worn off if the small number at the class

has led to the sense of familiarity from the beginning. Is it necessary to-day to proceed against the slackness which allows some to present candidates to the Bishop for Confirmation with whom they have had no personal interview at all?

In the case of girls I would plead once again against the dull, bare room which is thought good enough for the Confirmation class. A corner of the church, possibly one of the quiet chapels, if such exist, or a vestry, would seem to be the best place. There are obvious reasons why, especially in the present condition of the Church in England, and the way in which unmarried clergy are still regarded in many parts of the country, the girls' or women's classes should not be held in the priest's house.

As to the length of Confirmation instructions, I write with much trepidation, in the certainty that I shall arouse opposition; therefore, I speak only for myself when I say that I find boys and girls do not listen to me willingly for more than twenty-five minutes at the outside at one time. Other preachers may be more gifted or more fortunate, and may be able to hold people's attention longer than I can; but I am always a

that I may continue to speak after the assimilative power of my audience has been exhausted. I often remember with terror the words of Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*: "I marvel, Signior Benedick, that you will still be talking: nobody marks you."

3. *The Rule of Life*.—The end of our course of instructions for the Sacraments should be the provision for our candidates of a wise and simple rule of life, graduated according to their varying needs and powers. If we have had them in the Catechism, or under our care in other ways, the obligations of the Catholic life will be already known to them; indeed if a candidate has not (for instance) been fulfilling the obligation of hearing Mass on Sundays during the time of instruction, it would surely be most unwise to admit him to the Sacraments at all, until he has amended his ways.

But let us take it that these elementary things are already understood: what would be needed, then, is a rule as to the frequency of confession and Communion, with a careful explanation that it is a rule to begin with, and will be always subject to revision as the spiritual life grows. The prayers will probably

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already have been dealt with, and inquiries made as to what kind of prayers are used. Over and over again it is found that the whole prayer life is most elementary, and needs complete reconstruction. Directions can also be given as to fasting and almsgiving, simple but as definite as possible. The battle against sin, and the means to be used to win it, will already have been dealt with in the confessional. It is specially important not to overload the rule of life with details ; it should be short, concise and easily remembered, and should deal only with essential matters.

I venture with all diffidence to put down here a rule to which we expect the members of our Communicants' Guild at St Alban's, Birmingham, to conform. It was first drawn up during the National Mission, and has been accepted by a very large number of our devout people. It is called "The Catholic Rule of Life," and is as follows :—

1. To pray every day, in the morning, at noon and at night, and always in temptation. To try to read a few verses of the Bible daily.

2. To try to fast according to the Church's

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rule, and to give what I ought to God and the poor.

3. To hear Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of obligation.

4. To make my confession regularly.

5. To receive Holy Communion regularly and frequently.

6. To be a missionary of Jesus Christ at home, at work and amongst my friends.

4. *A Book of Devotion*.—Finally, a wise choice of the Book of Devotion to be given to our penitents and communicants is exceedingly important, and does much to give its tone to their whole view of religion. It is impossible for anyone to use such a book as, for instance, *Catholic Prayers* regularly and devoutly without imbibing very completely the Catholic spirit. The same may be said as regards the children of *St Swithin's Prayer Book* and the *Christian's Companion*. No doubt the reason why these books are so often attacked is just because they are so complete, and produce such marked Catholic results in the lives of our people. But that is just what we want; our whole aim from first to last is to fill our Confirmation candidates with a firm love of God in the Holy Catholic Church and Sacraments.

CHAPTER VII

PERSONAL DEALINGS

ONE of the most perplexing decisions which a priest is always having to make in a parish is the proper relation as to time and importance between organisation and personal work. We find men erring in both ways. One man is the competent organiser, who has a real love for that kind of work, and is in danger of giving himself wholly up to it, and becoming somewhat inhuman in his sympathies. Another man is a sympathetic and patient lover of souls, but his parish has all gone to pieces through lack of organisation. Nothing is more fatal than to imagine that one man can do one kind of work and another man another kind : that one has a genius for organising and can hardly be expected to do much with souls, while the other is deeply spiritual but must not be expected to care about organising.

Much time must of necessity be given, particularly by the incumbent, but also by the

assistant clergy, to the orderly working out of the various departments of the parochial work. They cannot afford to let the organisation go beyond their control. Affairs must not collapse, and the personal element in the differing works must not get out of hand. But he is an unhappy priest indeed, and all the more unhappy because so often unconscious of his trouble, whose whole time is given to committees and other meetings, and who cries out, half in pride and half in misery, that he serves on twenty committees and can get time for nothing else. Nothing is more fatal than to have no time left for the precious, most blessed and happy work of dealing individually with the souls of the people.

When I was first ordained it was regarded as an axiom by almost everybody that, whatever a young priest might or might not be able to do, at least it was his duty to be able to run a boys' club. There was endless literature on the subject, and we read it, partly with edification, partly with despair. And how hard we worked! We got money together for buildings and furniture; we worked ourselves to the bone in organising concerts; we played ping-pong, draughts and cards

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every evening of our lives. We made ourselves miserable, and lost half our boys, through the difficulty of discipline. We managed football and cricket clubs and outings without number. And then came the time when the Confirmation classes were to begin, and, with the time, terrible disappointment. In my first parish I spent most of my time running a club for the boys, and when the time came for names to be given in for preparation for the Sacraments only one boy came forward ; and he after two days called upon me to withdraw his name. Public opinion in the club was strongly against the receiving of the Sacraments. The reason was that I knew the boys as club boys, but I had no really personal knowledge of any of them.

And so in the later days of our priesthood ; the busy priest rushes from supper to Evensong, from Evensong to committee, from committee to club and from club weary to bed. So evening after evening goes by and he wonders why his people do not " come on."

I. *Men and Boys*

Now it is obvious that there must be a great deal of organisation in every parish ;

but if a priest is to do his real work he must make time, and a great deal of time, for personal dealings. Evening visiting must be done, for the evening is the only time when we can see most of the men. And here it is worth while to remember that our faithful communicant men are grateful for a visit. We too often neglect them in order to run after men who have no intention whatever of doing what we desire.

Even more effective in a priest's personal work is the use of his own room. There is the atmosphere which is needful for this work of dealing with souls. The bright fire and the cigarette, the vanishing shyness on both sides, the gradual shading-off of the talk, so naturally, from friendly conversation about things in general to the deep things of the spirit: what faithful priest does not know this? The question or reproof or warning which is plumped out at the club or in the street, or at the church door, and is quickly resented, comes now perfectly simply and inevitably, and leads to an affectionate understanding which goes far beyond what either expected.

This is the time when decisions are reached ; when a young man who has been coming to

the church for some time and has never made his confession, who indeed is prejudiced against it, now, in the most simple and natural way, leads up to it himself. Objections are considered and doubts resolved, and the great decision of a lifetime is made.

Many a conversion has been prepared for or finished, many a heroic battle for purity and righteousness has been started, at such times as these.

And, moreover, these private talks are so fruitful of renewals. The young man has been slack about his religious duties for a long time: and a question shot at him—"When are you coming to confession again?"—has so little effect. But how different it is in a room where he feels himself welcome, where he has often been before, where he is not rushed, but quietly and firmly led back. A priest's room is crowded with sacred associations of friendships which are intimately connected with his confessional and his altar.

As his life goes on in the parish, which becomes so unspeakably dear to him through numberless friendships, formed and cemented in this way, a priest finds his time more and

more taken up in this most fruitful of all work.

2. *Women and Girls*

It may be said that all this so far has been about men and boys and private interviews with them. But what about the women and girls in our parishes? Can they be reached in the same way? Here it must be confessed that a priest is in a real difficulty. He may have men and boys to his rooms, either singly or in numbers, as often as he likes, and no one has a word to say in criticism of his action. But the holiest man cannot afford to brave the dangers of the scandalous tongues which will be full of talk about him if he does the same with women and girls. It is common knowledge that many priests have ruined their work and reputation, when no real harm has been done, in this particular matter. It is so difficult to draw the line. We all know the staid matron or the elderly spinster whom we can entertain in our rooms without any kind of danger; and we all know equally well the unstable young woman who has left her group of giggling companions on the doorstep and will go out and give a highly coloured, and often completely

apocryphal, account of what has occurred at the interview.

The Catholic priest by the very nature of his work is particularly open to these dangers ; and yet any man of common-sense, however he may persuade himself that he is not acting wrongly, knows perfectly well how unwise he is when he encourages persons of this kind to come to his house. And, moreover, the young woman knows it just as well as he does. There is, of course, the tiresome and most dangerous young person who will attempt to force herself into the priest's house time after time ; but a well-trained housekeeper knows perfectly well how to deal with women of this sort. And, if necessary, an appointment can be made for a meeting in church.

For, after all, the church is the right place for interviews with women. The vast majority of our women and girls are quiet and devout, and perfectly understand all this, and what has been said about the value of interviews with men and boys applies just as much here. It is in these invaluable private talks that our best work is done ; work which although outside the confessional is directly connected with it. We have an opportunity here for a freedom of speech and a spacious-

ness of time which cannot be had in the confessional. It is at these times that our sermons are pushed home, that we become the advisers of an always growing body of devout souls, and most of our precious friendships are built up.

A word about the use of Sunday afternoon. Certainly it is trying to have to give up our quiet tea-time after a long and tiring day ; but in so many cases it is our only opportunity of seeing our boys by themselves, or the boys and their girls together. Nothing pleases them more than to be asked to a Sunday afternoon tea with their priest. It brings him naturally into that part of their lives with which it is so important that he should be thoroughly acquainted. Sunday afternoons are, in some ways, the most fruitful time of the whole week.

Something has been said elsewhere about the accessibility of the priest. He should never be denied to his people. If he cannot see them at the moment that they want him, an appointment should be made. A wonderful deal of business is got through, and appointments made by those priests who are accustomed to stand near the door of the church after High Mass and Evensong on Sundays.

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After the administration of the Sacraments private interviews are the first call on a priest's time. They are priceless opportunities of bringing home the Catholic faith and the Catholic life into the hearts of our people.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONFESSIONAL

I. Our Need at the Present Day

IT will hardly be denied by anyone that one of the most pressing needs of the Church of England to-day is a far larger number of priests who are properly qualified to hear confessions. To some of us a cry is continually coming from younger priests for help in understanding and in carrying out this most responsible and perplexing, yet most blessed, part of their ministry. They tell us that they really know almost nothing about it, that they are in an almost continual state of fear lest they should be misusing their ministry and endangering souls. This trouble has been much intensified lately in the army at home and abroad. Young men and boys who, at home, have been accustomed to make their confession regularly to a priest who has learnt how to administer the Sacrament of Penance are now, so to speak, cast upon the world. They have been told when they left

home of the enormous importance of keeping true to their Sacraments, and that though it would not be easy they must make their confession and receive their Communion as often as possible.

But it has been hard indeed for some of them to do so, in spite of their extraordinary bravery and persistence in seeking the Sacraments. At home they knew exactly what to do ; they knew the hours when they would find a priest in church ; they knew that he would be one who would understand and be able to help them. It never occurred to them to question that he would be experienced in the administration of the Sacrament. Most likely they had never been to any other confessor but one, or only very occasionally to another priest belonging to the same church.

And then they left home. They had no chance of going to their own priest. They must approach the regimental chaplain, as they had been told to do by their own confessor when they left home, and ask him, often a complete stranger, to hear their confession. And what trials they have been through ! I am thankful to say that I have heard of very few cases in which a chaplain has refused to hear a confession, but many times it has been

necessary for the penitent to teach the priest beforehand how to hear a confession. One case comes to my mind of a boy who made this request to his chaplain and was told that he—the chaplain—was an old-fashioned High Churchman and had never heard a confession. The soldier lent him a copy of *Catholic Prayers*, pointing out the pages on which the Sacrament of Penance was described, and was eventually able to make his confession and receive absolution.

It is only fair to the chaplains to say that they almost always expressed themselves willing to do their best; but it is a great responsibility to undertake so sacred a work as hearing one or many confessions without training and without experience.

I have written about the army because the circumstances of the war have brought into the open, in comparatively few cases, an evil which is rife all over the Church of England. It is common knowledge that a number of people who are now actually making their confessions regularly, or are prepared to do so when the call comes, has increased and is increasing rapidly. Prejudice is dying down, and the realisation of the extraordinary help which confession brings to souls is growing

fast. Many of the best Evangelicals and Nonconformists are coming to the same conclusion. Things are moving fast now, and they will soon be moving faster still. One chaplain gives this testimony : " I am not what is called a Ritualist ; I was brought up an Evangelical, but I feel certain that we need to teach, much more boldly, Confession, to our men and boys." " I am more than ever convinced," says an experienced chaplain at a military hospital, " of the absolute necessity in the Church of some sort of private confession and spiritual direction."

When the stage is reached at which people have so far put away prejudice as to feel that confession is a good thing for many people, and is not to be reserved only for criminals or adulterers ; when they have come to see that young people especially may have their whole lives purified and strengthened by this Sacrament ; when they hear a good deal of it, and no longer believe that it is a device of the devil to enslave souls ; when this stage has been reached, a further development of a personal desire to gain this help is not very far away.

But how is the Church of England prepared to meet this growing demand ? It need hardly be said that of all the Sacraments this is the

one which needs the most skill. For the administration of baptism or Holy Communion a certain technical knowledge of manual acts and the use of the voice, together with personal piety, are sufficient ; but holiness of life, even experience of the world or of a large parish, in themselves, if not combined with the knowledge of the laws of moral theology, will not fit a man to hear confessions and to direct souls. Those of us to whose lot it falls to hear many confessions have continually brought before us the fatal results of the incompetent dealings of untrained confessors. Many a soul has been landed in almost inextricable difficulties by unwise counsel, or by that snare of unpractised confessors, the dominance of the personal note. Or it may have been the exercise of an unwise familiarity or a spiritual tyranny ; while many more are continually put off from their confessions altogether by being given impossible penances, or being treated with undue sternness, or through not being held with a sufficiently firm hand.

But pages might be filled with the tragedies which happen far too often in English parishes through the administration of the sacrament of penance by unskilled priests. What is necessary is that our theological colleges,

without any delay, should put the study of moral theology—as, of course, the whole of the rest of the Church have always put it—in the forefront of their curriculum. Harm enough and to spare has been done already by the neglect of this paramount duty. Is it too much to hope that the end of the war will find better things on the way?

But what of that vast number of priests for whom the training time is long past, who are actually engaged, often or occasionally, in hearing confessions? It is they who need help most of all, and indeed everywhere they are conscious of their need. Whenever a priest publishes anything in a book or in the Church newspapers on this subject, he is besieged by letters from priests who write to him, saying: “What shall we do? We have to hear confessions; we have no experience; can you help us?”

At this point I should like to make a suggestion. There is now in the Church of England a fairly large body of priests who have made up by reading since ordination, and by a long course of practical experience, for the ignorance with which they began when they first went into parish work. They are competent confessors with a practical know-

ledge not only of the technical rules of moral theology, but also of the normal penitents in English parishes. Would it not be well for young, or even for older, priests who feel their need to get together and to ask one or other of these men to come over and help them by giving a course of elementary lectures on "How to hear Confessions"? The lecturer could recommend books which might profitably be read, and in the busy life of priests in city parishes it is a very great help to be told just what books are the suitable ones. But, even more than that, he can illustrate the rules by his own experience of just the kind of men and women, boys and girls with whom his brother priests have to deal. It often happens that the most elementary and fatal blunders are spoiling a priest's ministrations which can be put right by a few words from a more experienced man.

2. *What should a Confessor know?*—There are two branches of knowledge which are necessary for a priest who hears confessions. The one is moral theology—that is, the system of laws which the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, through the ages, has set out for the guidance of those to whom is committed the care of souls. The neglect of

moral theology in the Church of England is clearly enough shown by the fact that we are at present almost entirely dependent upon Roman Catholic treatises on the subject; though at last we are beginning to do something for ourselves. Father Belton's book, *A Manual for Confessors*, is a happy augury of this.

The second branch of knowledge necessary for a confessor is human nature, and this is gained by hearing confessions; and the two must go together.

The parish priest must know how to distinguish a really contrite penitent from one who has little or no contrition. He must be able to help an ignorant or shallow person to a fuller penitence. He must understand the signs which show a real desire for amendment of life, or an insufficient intention of such amendment. He must know in what circumstances absolution should be given and how it should be given. In such elementary matters as these we are continually coming across the effects of the dealings of inexperienced priests.

Moreover, the priest must know the nature of satisfaction, and the rules which govern the imposition of penance. He must understand

the necessity and the limits of the duty of reparation which has to be made in so many cases. He must certainly understand the need and the obligation of the seal of confession, the object of it, how it may be violated, how far he may use knowledge obtained in the confessional, what is and what is not the violation of the seal. It is necessary for him to have all that delicate and intricate understanding which is implied in the direction of souls ; when and in what cases the confessor is bound to give instruction ; how to assist the penitent in the means of amendment, the overcoming of mortal sin, and growth in virtue ; and what suggestions he should make for a rule of life. He must be able to deal effectively with those persons who, by their own fault or by necessity, are placed in circumstances which are an occasion of sin to them, and with habitual or relapsing sinners. He must be skilled in the remedies to be prescribed, in advising the frequency of confession, and the circumstances of giving, deferring or refusing absolution.

Then there is the great variety of different classes of penitents : grown-up people, boys and girls, priests and religious, the sick and the dying. There is that perplexing but

numerous body of men and women who are described by the word "scrupulous," and who are found, if not frequently in the worst form, yet in many varieties, in most parishes. A very important side of moral theology is its relation to the law of the land. This is a subject which requires the most careful treatment and skilled experience.

All this is the barest outline of the kind of work which innumerable priests are doing, or attempting to do, in English parishes to-day. It has been summarised in order to draw attention to the growing need for good training. It is unnecessary further to emphasise the responsibility which has to be borne, and the perplexities which have to be solved, if this duty is to be performed, not merely efficiently, but in such a manner as to avoid disaster. Is it possible to press too strongly the necessity of training for such a burden of spiritual duty?

3. *The Priest in the Confessional*.—It is commonly supposed by those who do not understand the meaning of the confessional that it must be, not merely a difficult and arduous, but also a highly unattractive work for the priest to whose lot it falls. It is supposed that a man who has to listen over and over again to the catalogue of his people's sins

must be filled with strong disgust, even if he is not himself tainted by what he hears. Such expressions as "the filthy confessional," though mercifully less often heard to-day than they once were, are still fruitful of much harm, and display a state of mind for which "misunderstanding" is too kind a word. It is quite true that a confessor does find his work inexpressibly arduous and responsible; he would indeed be careless and indifferent if he did not; but ask any priest who hears confessions at all regularly what he feels about it, and he will probably tell you that he has learnt more about holiness and the love of God, and the battle for purity, in the confessional, than in all the books he has read or the sermons he has heard. It must be remembered that a priest is continually hearing the confessions of men and women who are holier than himself, and learns from them at least as much as he teaches. It must be remembered, too, that in the confessional he sees souls at their noblest and best. Whatever sins they have committed they have come to lay in penitence at the feet of Christ. They are filled with an ardent longing to do better, and it is the unspeakable privilege of their confessor to see the most heroic struggles beginning and going

on in the lives of those whose secrets are utterly unknown to any other human being. He is trusted in the simplest way by all sorts and conditions of people ; he knows the sublimest facts of human goodness as well as the most pitiful failures of human weakness. But, greatest of all, he is used continually by the Lord `Christ as His ambassador ; it is through his lips that the Lord speaks the words of pardon ; it is his mind and heart that are used to impart the Divine wisdom. He is taught by God the art of the direction of souls. Surely no labour can be too sustained, no course of study too hard, no life of prayer and meditation too persevering for a man who is thus used as the instrument and messenger of Jesus Christ.

And if the confessional is blessed to the priest, it is surely blessed also to the penitent. How many boys and young men have been saved by it, whom nothing else in the world, so far as one can see, could have delivered from the contraction of sinful habits which would have darkened all their lives ! How many have been kept straight by it who would otherwise almost certainly have fallen ! How many girls are trained in the confessional to be holy wives and mothers whose influence

will extend itself over the generations to come !

Every priest knows the incomparable value, not merely to individual souls nor only to the Church, but to the whole nation, of this part of his ministry ; and every priest deplores the fact that the confessional only touches the smallest fringe of the people.

Who can number the countless souls who are every day being saved from sin and set on the road of renewal in English parishes to-day through the sacrament of penance, or are reaching forward to new heights in the spiritual life which have only become possible for them because they are being directed by faithful and true priests in the confessional ? Its influence is rapidly extending everywhere, and we who know the truth are convinced that here is the true ground of the hope of renewal for our Church and Nation.

4. *Compulsory Confession*.—A bitter controversy rages about the question as to whether confession ought to be compulsory or not. It is well to observe at once that no sacrament is compulsory, or can be made compulsory, at least in the present state of the Church of England. If, for instance, a person understands, and it is generally

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pretty well understood, that in such and such a parish confession is regarded as the normal preliminary to Confirmation and First Communion it is the easiest thing in the world to go to the next parish, where in all probability no such circumstances exist: this is not a satisfactory arrangement, but it works, at least in the towns.

Let us take it frankly as a fact that in some parishes confession is regarded as practically necessary before Confirmation and is strongly urged as a regular practice afterwards. Is it advisable—as the whole of the Catholic Church, East and West, long ago decided—that confession should be compulsory on a certain number of stated occasions in the life of a Catholic Christian? Let us look at the matter simply from a Church of England point of view, and as a matter of expediency. There is no doubt whatever that a great number of Communion in the Church of England are continually made by persons in a state of mortal sin, who either have not sufficient knowledge, or any real intention of repentance. Priests know well that if we could do so, we ought absolutely to refuse Communion to a certain number of people whom we know to be unfit, and that there

must be many more whose Communion is bad ones, but of whose condition we are ignorant. If confession were compulsory, say once a year, these persons would either not come to the altar or they would make their confession. But, it may be said, they would very likely make a bad confession. They would be expected by their relations and friends to receive the Holy Communion, and there would be a great deal of talk if they did not, or could not, do so. Therefore they would not make a full confession and would be in a worse state than before. There must always be this danger, though no doubt it has been greatly exaggerated. It must be remembered that public opinion generally in these days is not for, but against, receiving Holy Communion, and that unhappily it is easy to give it up without much remark. But many, if not most of those whose Communion is bad ones, are more or less unhappy about it and would be glad of a strong check which would force them to decide either to make their confession or to give up their Communion; while a priest skilled in his work would often be able by wise management to revolutionise their whole life by enabling them to change a bad confession into a good one.

On the other hand, under the voluntary system accepted by many Anglicans, it is the very people who ought to make their confession who refuse to do so when it is put to them. It is the boy or girl who is in a thoroughly bad way ; it is the man or woman who most needs regeneration who will not accept it in what is for them the only way ; but if the knot were cut for them they would live to thank God all their days that they were brought by discipline to the means of grace which has saved them. There must always be the balance of good and evil on this question. Is it better to risk a certain number of incomplete confessions under the compulsory system, or to be content that vast numbers of souls who need it should not be brought to make their confession at all, and should regularly communicate when in mortal sin ? The Catholic Church of East and West made up her mind long ago ; the Church of England has in practice gone back on that decision, but a growing number of priests and laity are becoming convinced that Rome and the East are right and we are wrong ; and that the enforcement of discipline, and not slackness about it, is what we want now and in the future.

5. *Atmosphere in the Parish as regards the Confessional.*—It is obvious that a priest who hears confessions is called to a life of peculiar recollection and holiness. He has perforce to pass a great part of his outward life in the society of those who are his penitents, and who consciously or unconsciously are influenced in their attitude towards, and their acceptance of, his direction of their lives by the manner in which he lives his own. There is an absurd notion still existing in many minds, which has come from the infrequency of confession in the past, that a confessor and his penitents ought not to know one another socially. But surely the priest's life and conversation are meant to be the extension in the lives of his penitents of the direction he gives them in the confessional. His sermons do something, his private interviews with them do more, but his example does most of all in pushing home his spiritual lessons. And, therefore, a just balance, founded on continual prayer and meditation, is necessary for a confessor in his life among his people. An unwise priest who gives the impression in his intercourse with his penitents that he has not forgotten what he heard in the confessional will never win their

confidence. On the other hand, frivolity or unguardedness of manner, or any falling into inordinate affection towards his penitents, will be more fatal still to a priest's influence. What our people want to feel is that we are perfectly naturally their friend in both aspects of life ; in the confessional as the tender and understanding director and judge, as the ambassador and mouthpiece of the Lord Christ ; and in outward things as one who, knowing the hidden secrets of their life, is the friend who can sympathise with them in a way that no other person is able to do ; and yet can enter into the simple concerns of daily life with an interest which is all the deeper because of the supernatural relation which exists between him and them. The tie which binds the faithful priest to his penitents is unique in human experience.

CHAPTER IX

SUNDAY EVENING

THE question of the best use of Sunday evening for the conversion and edification of souls is one which is exercising the minds of the clergy of the Church of England a good deal at the present time. And we who are trying to work out Catholic methods in English parishes are at least as much concerned with it as any others. We feel that the High or Sung Mass of Sunday mornings is primarily for the faithful. Its very magnificence and mystery are infinitely precious to those who understand, and indeed are attractive to many of those who do not yet fully understand, but who are by nature and temperament Catholic. But without doubt many of those we wish to gain find it too wonderful and excellent for them. They come, and it is strange; the very discovery of the places in their books, so dear to ordinary Englishmen, is difficult; the ceremonial is unlike anything they have seen before, especially if they

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have been brought up on ordinary Church of England lines ; and the net result is that they are " put off." They say they do not understand it ; that it is Roman Catholic ; and they do not come again.

What we so greatly need is a " landing-stage," or " fish-pond," however we may put it ; we want something easier and simpler, with which the uninstructed can begin ; we want something which will hold them at first, and get them gradually accustomed to the atmosphere of an English church. It may seem heretical to some of my friends to suggest that the Mass is not all that is necessary, but experience shows that an approach is needed by many people, particularly by that vast number who are accustomed to go to church on Sunday night only ; an approach which will lead them on to the fulness of Catholic worship.

This opportunity is given to us on Sunday night ; it is the time which is regarded (wrongly, of course) by the majority of church-going people in England to-day as the normal hour for worship. It is a well-known fact that in very many churches where the congregation on Sunday morning is exceedingly thin it is much larger on

Sunday night at Evening Prayer. This is easily explained by the industrial weariness of our people after a long and tiring week's work, which keeps so many of the men in bed on Sunday morning, and by the extraordinary devotion to the Sunday dinner which engages the full attention of so many of the women at home in the earlier part of the day. Beyond doubt it is true that as Catholics learn to observe the obligation of hearing Mass on Sundays, the morning congregation grows; and in many parishes it was larger than the evening one even before raids had begun to keep so many people at home at nights. In some places it is really difficult to get the men to come to church again at night in any case. But the fact remains that Sunday evening is a wonderful opportunity for teaching and evangelising, and for drawing into the fulness of Catholicism those who are still outside.

1. The Present Arrangement on Sunday Night

What shall we do, then, with our Sunday evening? Many priests are unwilling to upset the present arrangement; and indeed we must be careful not to dogmatise too freely

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about the failure of Evening Prayer until we are quite sure that it has failed. It cannot truthfully be said that it is unpopular, at least in many parishes. Whether the congregations are drawn by the sermon, or by the singing of hymns and anthems, or by Anglican chants, or whatever it be, it cannot be denied that many churches are pretty full on Sunday nights, and that to condemn the present state of things off-hand might be dangerous.

On the other hand, there are frequent complaints of the length of the service, and of the tediousness of long Psalms, such as that for the fifteenth evening. The choice of Lessons, too, is on many Sundays most unsatisfactory ; for, granted that there must be a selection, since it is impossible to read the whole Bible on Sunday nights during the year, it might be desirable to choose Lessons which would not only be shorter than some of those we have at present, but also more suited to the edification of the kind of person in church. The State Prayers find few defenders in these days ; not from any want of patriotism, but because provision is made elsewhere for prayers for the King, and other arrangements could easily be made for the intercession for

the Royal Family. Certainly changes are going to be made; the report of the Committee on Public Worship and many other signs of the times make that clear.

And if changes are to be made, Catholics must see to it that the variety and elasticity which are coming should be wide enough to include the kind of services they desire to have in their churches. It is a great opportunity, and must not be neglected.

2. Suggestions which are being made for Reform

Let us now consider briefly some of the ideas which are being put out with a view to making Sunday evening more effective for the worship of our people. There seems to be little evidence of any widespread desire to dethrone Evening Prayer from its place as the usual Sunday evening service. Moreover, many of us have little sympathy with the plans which are being made in all directions for cutting it about, for shortening and popularising it, as it is called. It is possible that, as has been said, a shorter and more appropriate choice of Psalms and Lessons ought to be provided for some Sundays; but if we are to have Evening Prayer at all, let

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us keep to the ancient structure as we know it, at any rate up to the end of the Third Collect. An Office Hymn has been introduced in many churches between the First Lesson and the *Magnificat*, and is an improvement from a popular as well as a liturgical point of view. But it may well be doubted if the effort to compile a short and popular evening service consisting of an eviscerated and attenuated form of Evening Prayer will be successful.

A better suggestion is that we should leave Evening Prayer as it stands, with the abbreviations outlined above, and regard the liturgical part of the service as completed at the end of the Third Collect ; after that there would be freedom for prayers and devotions of a more special and pointed kind than are contained in the Prayer Book. They would be concerned (at the present time) with the War, Missions Abroad, Social Righteousness, the Sick and the Poor, the Departed, and all the multitude of needs which at once rise to the minds of all readers. This part of the service could be infinitely varied, and forms of prayer could be drawn up dealing with every variety of subject, and meeting all sorts of needs. The sermon could be used as a call

to prayer, and might contain suggestions leading to it. Extempore prayer, where it seemed desirable, could also be used. But there is no need to dwell in detail on this subject ; every priest and most laymen who read this book will long have had their own ideas on the subject.

3. *Extra - Liturgical Devotions to the Blessed Sacrament*

At this point I wish to put forward a suggestion which has often been made before, and is beginning to make its way slowly in the Church of England, though in face of great opposition. I mean the use of the services of Exposition and Benediction on Sunday night. Church of England opinion is strongly divided on this matter ; but the point of view of most people is probably represented by a phrase on the subject which occurs in the Report of the Public Worship Committee to which reference has been made :

“ The Committee discussed the extra-liturgical use of the Reserved Sacrament ; but there was considerable difference of opinion, and it was decided to record this fact without further comment.”

This may not be very conclusive, but it is at least hopeful that an official body, such as the Committee, should have gone so far even as to leave the question open. It is a real advance; for it is not many years since it would have been taken for granted that even a serious discussion of such a matter was disloyal to the Church of England.

I shall not work again through the arguments for and against the use of the Blessed Sacrament for these purposes; the controversy, alas! still rages around this sacred subject, and I do not propose to use this book as an opportunity for adding to it. All I wish to do is to describe a Sunday evening service which would be welcomed by a growing number of English priests and laymen.

The service would begin with Evening Prayer, shortened as suggested, up to the Third Collect. A momentary digression may be allowed here to plead for the custom of sitting during the Psalms. It is a great relief to tired men and women; it really assists their devotions; and the charge of irreverence can with difficulty be urged against a practice which not only is universal in the Roman Catholic Church, but which is also,

I believe, the custom of every religious house in Christendom.

After the sermon, and while the collection was being taken up, a small procession would be formed in the vestry, consisting of thurifer, servers with lights, master of ceremonies, priest assistant (if there is one to be had) and the officiating priest with acolyte. If the Blessed Sacrament were reserved on the High Altar they would proceed there direct; if it were on a side altar the procession would go there; the priest assistant would open the Tabernacle, and give the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance or ciborium to the officiant, who is vested in cope and humeral veil. They would then go to the High Altar, where the priest assistant, or the officiant, would place the Blessed Sacrament on the "Throne." The ordinary service would then follow, consisting of the hymn *O Salutaris Hostia* (A. and M., 311, Part II.), a metrical litany, which could also be taken from A. and M. or any other hymn-book, or omitted altogether if the service be thought too long, followed by *Tantum Ergo* (A. and M., 309, Part II.) and the customary versicle and response, with the Collect for Corpus Christi. Then the 117th Psalm with antiphon, and the

Divine Praises. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament would be given at the usual place, and all could be in English.

It might be possible at the present time as a compromise to use the ciborium instead of the monstrance for the purposes of this service, if it would help to meet the difficulty felt by some of the Bishops on account of the 25th Article ; it might also be well, if the Bishop specially requests it, not to give the actual benediction, but to be content with Exposition for purposes of prayer and adoration. But, at any rate, everything possible should be done to make the altar as brilliant and attractive as possible. The utmost reverence will, of course, be observed by all taking part in the service.

I have described the service in some detail as an instance of a form of worship which, with or without the modifications suggested, some of our Bishops might be prepared to tolerate. It could easily be made one of intercession, the prayers taking the place of the Litany, or other arrangements being made. This would bring it into line with the suggestions for less formal prayer outlined above. There can be no doubt of the popularity of the service, a popularity which would grow

as time went on. It is brief, and in great part invariable ; the short hymns and psalm are already well known by all English congregations, and it forms a dignified and glorious ending to the evening worship. Above all, it centres in the Blessed Sacrament. It is intensely painful that it should be a matter of such acute controversy ; and beyond doubt as much pain is felt by Bishops who are conscientiously driven to forbid it as by those who feel equally bound to press for it. But I believe it is a spontaneous movement, independent of men and personalities, and that it will gradually make its way in the Church of England. It might be well to begin it as the special week-night intercession service, so as to familiarise the more devout members of the congregation with it, before starting it on Sunday night.

4. *Other Possibilities*

Little has been said in this book about what are called Mission Services. They show endless variety ; but the reason why they have not been discussed is not that the Catholic method neglects so vast and important an opportunity, but because different " Schools of Thought " are fairly well agreed as to the

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general necessity and form of such services ; and my object has been to describe briefly the salient points in which Catholic methods differ from those more ordinarily used in the Church of England. Much has, of necessity, been taken for granted, or a lifetime would not have been long enough for the subject.

A few words may be said here, however, about the use of the Mission Service on Sunday nights. It has been found well in many places, particularly in Lent and Advent, to give up Evening Prayer altogether for a few Sundays and to have a Mission Service instead. It provides an opportunity for a very informal style of service, conducted without the help of the choir and of the ordinary appurtenances of divine worship, in which preaching of an unusually searching type is the principal part, and when hymns can be sung of a kind which could not always be used on account of their highly subjective character.

It is often said, and probably with truth, that this sort of thing has for the present lost its appeal. Certainly it seems to be a fact that the faithful, especially the men, are a little weary of the style of sermon and hymn which distinguish the Mission Service ; my own experience of the last few years goes to

prove that this is so. Not long ago a missionary who had any power for this kind of work had little difficulty in crowding even the largest churches so completely that the choir stalls, and even the altar steps, had to be used for seating the congregation. It would seem that this phase has passed, at any rate for the present. Probably it is a good sign that more thoughtful preaching and better hymns are wanted ; though we must always be very cautious lest our faithful become self-centred and forgetful or impatient of the unconverted masses outside ; often they fail to realise how much their exclusive attitude, and their tacit assumption that the church was built for them only, help to account for the emptiness of the churches for which they are so ready to blame the clergy. A great deal can still be done by informal mission services for a few Sundays at a time ; though perhaps what is needed as a sermon is a convincing, homiletic instruction, made as attractive as it can be, rather than the somewhat fervid style of appeal we used to make a few years ago. The changes in the demand for different mission methods are interesting and intricate, and we clergy often make bad mistakes by striking the wrong note. If generalisations can be

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made, it seems that what we want in our parish churches just now are conviction and sobriety. At any rate, he is a wise priest who is able so to gauge the psychology of his own or of somebody else's congregation as to provide a Sunday night service which will fulfil the purpose for which it is needed.

CHAPTER X

THE UNFAITHFUL AND THE OCCASIONAL OFFICES

THE Church of England pays a heavy price for Establishment in more ways than one ; but there are great advantages about it also ; and none of these is greater than the idea it fosters in the minds of our people that we really do belong to them and they to us. The Roman Catholic priest, the Wesleyan, Baptist, or Congregational minister, each has his own adherents and visits them ; but he does not—and is not expected to—call and see anybody else unless there is some special reason for his doing so. The priest of the Church of England, on the contrary, is expected to visit and to care for all the people in his parish, whether it is possible for him to do so or not. It is not only the church people—that is, those who practise their religion more or less faithfully—who expect a call, but many others. We all know the woman who never darkens a church door,

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and never means to darken it, but who gladly welcomes the clergyman, and tells him he is the first minister who has been to see her for seven years, and so on. Or the man who is hardly even a Christian, who complains bitterly that "the parson comes to see the missus, but nobody troubles about him." He really would welcome an evening talk with a priest of the Church, even if he has not the least intention of allowing it to lead him to anything serious.

Moreover, the idea of the parish—meaning what we mean, not simply the administrative municipal area, but the district which centres in the church—is firmly established in the minds of our people. They often have a sentimental attachment to it and if they move away for a time they express great satisfaction at "getting back into the parish" if they are able to do so. They are eager to use the church for baptisms, churchings, marriages and funerals, even though they move out of the parish or never come to church at any other time. "All the rest of my children were christened at St ——'s and I should like to bring the baby," or: "My father and mother were married at St ——'s and I do not see why I should not be." They believe that

it is in some way theirs, and they are in a feeble kind of way attached to it.

No doubt this feeling has its dangers. Many people delude themselves into thinking that they are religious, or at least sufficiently so, if they have a sentimental attachment to their parish or church. It is often urged that the delusion is dangerous, and that people of this class ought to be made to feel very keenly their position, by finding that they receive little or no consideration when they come to the Occasional Offices. I shall give my reasons below for urging a different way of getting to work. Just now I want to deal with certain methods of using the deeply implanted feeling to which I have referred.

1. *Visiting*.—I almost tremble as I write down the aged aphorism that “A house-going parson makes a church-going people,” but it is so true, and so often forgotten, that it will bear repeating. It may be said, and is said, that people who only keep up their religion because they are “spoon fed” are not worth holding. But the whole basis of the argument put forth in this book is that we priests are dealing for the greater part of our time with “babes and sucklings,” with people who have to be watched over and cared for

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with ceaseless diligence by the priest who loves them.

“For the love of God is deeper than the measures of mankind,
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.”

But looking at this problem from the human side, it seems clear that many souls are saved because the Church has cared for them, and compelled them to come in and to stay in. What priest does not know how, over and over again, when he has started out at the hateful hour of two-thirty in the afternoon, wishing himself anywhere but in the parish, and has stuck to it faithfully and done his visiting, he has come back positively knowing that by the grace of God he has that very afternoon done solid work for souls? Some of us have not the gift of loving our visiting, and find it intensely difficult; but we know very well how effective it is.

And what about house-to-house visiting? Is it really effective? I would answer the question by asking another: Can it be done? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. During the last fourteen years I have worked in two parishes. In the first the population was 2300 and there were two priests. In this case

it was a duty to visit regularly every house in the parish. We knew every soul: we visited not only the faithful few, but the whole of the people of the parish, good, bad and indifferent, and it was good discipline. The same, no doubt, is true of almost all our country parishes. A priest of any diligence can visit every house in his parish several times in the year. In my present parish, house-to-house visiting by the clergy is impossible. The *ad hoc* visiting takes up all the time. District visitors call from house to house so far as they can, and there it has to be left. Circumstances alter cases.

2. *Ad Hoc Visiting*.—No faithful priest ever has the least difficulty in finding enough visiting to do, and the more of it he does the more there is to be done. Space fails me to write in detail about sick-visiting. Volumes and volumes have been written upon it, and, after all, the method of dealing with our sick follows the general method of working with the whole. Our difficulty is that so few, comparatively, of our sick are instructed Catholics, and the work of bringing them to the Sacraments, if they can be got to them at all, is long and wearisome. Improvement only can come in this case through a more generally diffused know-

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ledge of the faith, and a more thorough acquaintance between priest and people.

The catechist in any parish has a great opportunity for fruitful visiting. He has in his Catechism a large number of children, many of whose parents are faithful to the Church. But there are others who have careless or indifferent homes. Any priest who looks through his list of the persons he has prepared for the Sacraments through a number of years will at once recognise that a vast proportion of those who have remained true are the ones who have come from the homes where one or both of the parents are communicants, and whose religious life has been fostered at home as well as at church. It is hardly necessary to point out that if we can convert the parents we shall be doing a work of deepest moment for the children. Surely the catechist should be unwearied in his visiting to the homes of his children. It is not only that he helps the parents; they also help him. Parents are human, and they are far more likely to see that their children are regular and punctual at the Catechism if they feel that Father So-and-So, whom they know and like, will miss them if they are absent. And, moreover, a catechist's work will be far more

effective with the children themselves if he knows the circumstances and surroundings and temptations of their daily life.

3. *The Occasional Offices.*—Every week in every large parish the priests are dealing with a certain number of people who come to them for the Occasional Offices of the Church, and our way of dealing with them greatly affects the estimate in which we are held in the parish. Such events as baptism, marriage, churching, funerals, with which the Occasional Offices are connected, are of primary importance in the history of each family; all that surrounds them is talked of and remembered for many and many a day, if not for a lifetime.

Now, supposing that many of those who come are, as we sometimes say, “practically heathen,” is it well that they should go away, even in this case, sore and angry because they have been treated with brusque rudeness by their parish priest? They may be more conscious than they were of their heathen condition; but are they more likely to come out of it because they have been snubbed and treated with contempt by a priest of God? Surely a quiet, courteous reception, followed—then, or at a visit later on—by a serious talk about the meaning and

responsibility of religion, is likely to do much more good than the method so often adopted in these days. It is not a question of condoning sin or neglect ; it is merely a question of the best way of making these good folk better Christians. I am convinced that courtesy is always more effective in the end than " plain speaking," which is often only another word for the grossest uncharity.

But, discipline must be maintained. Yes, of course it must ; and how can it be done ? Let us take the Occasional Offices one by one.

(a) *Churching*.—The service itself is jejune and poor, but it is an opportunity. What is done in many parishes is to give the woman at the time of her churching a card on which is to be written the proposed Christian names of the child, the names of the godparents, with a note appended that godparents must be communicants ; spaces for the signatures of father and mother and their address, and a short paragraph at the bottom of the card, explaining where it should be taken when filled up. The card, when completed, will be given by the parent or district visitor to the priest in whose district the home is. If he does not at present know them, or has not seen them for some time, he will visit the parents. The

inquiry as to whether the proposed sponsors are communicants will at once open up the subject of the Sacraments, and, indeed, the whole attitude of the people towards Church and religion. The responsibility of the parents themselves towards the child whom they are proposing to bring to baptism will raise discussions of fundamental importance. It is impossible, however, to go into detail about so simple a matter; every priest of the smallest experience will know what to do.

(b) The question of godparents at once brings us to serious problems. In a large and increasing number of parishes only those children are now baptized who seem to have some reasonable chance of being brought up as practising Christians. The exercise of this discipline still causes acute controversy, even amongst the clergy themselves. It is enough to say here that the old practice is dying out in Catholic parishes and making way for a stricter system. In parishes which accept this discipline it is usually the rule that no child shall be baptized unless it has at least one communicant sponsor, who, if necessary, must be supplied by the Church.

But whence? Our good communicants are already overburdened with an impossible

number of godchildren, far too many for it to be possible for them to exercise any effective influence over them and their parents. What is to be done? I frankly confess I do not know; it is one of the problems which ought to be thoroughly discussed at a conference of Catholic clergy. Meantime it is a valuable duty for communicants to have laid on them, in reason, the responsibility of sponsorship. It brings them out of themselves and deepens their realisation of religion, and it provides them with an opportunity of visiting regularly two or three homes. Even quite young communicants can undertake such a duty for the children of Christ's flock.

(c) *Marriage*.—Our opportunity as regards holy matrimony comes when the banns are put in; and here again there should be a card to be filled in, giving the names and addresses of the persons desiring to be married, and the other information necessary for the parish clerk, to which should be added certain questions, such as: Have you both been baptized? Is there any relationship between you? If so, what? Has either of you been married before? And so on.

No banns should be given out in church until one of the priests has seen both the man

and the woman who wish to be married. There may be some real impediment ; one or other of them is unbaptized, or something else may be wrong, or, if they are quite careless persons, the question kindly put : “ Why do you wish to be married in church when you never come at any other time ? ” will make them think, and may lead to an interesting conversation between them and their parish priest.

In only too many cases there has been sin, and it is imperative that something should be done to bring it home to the conscience of the man and woman. It may be said that two or three weeks are scarcely enough to begin any real work in the hearts of the people, who probably are almost completely ignorant of religion, and whose sense of sin is exceedingly weak. But it does happen sometimes, at any rate, that one or both may be brought to a better mind. At least in this case they can be instructed about making their confession, and after marriage, if they are living in the parish, this teaching can be continued. It will almost certainly be welcomed. People take a sentimental interest in the parson who married them. If they go away they can be commended to the priest in whose parish they are living.

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If they are obdurate, sterner measures can be taken.

Suppose, for instance, that a man and woman living in sin refuse to separate, if it is possible, even during the period when the banns are in course of being read, I do not see how any priest can conscientiously marry them ; he can only tell them that the blessing of the Church cannot be given on such a marriage and that they must go to the registry office. Perhaps, if they wish to fight for things—they seldom do—they could make matters very unpleasant ; but a faithful priest is willing to put up with what trouble may happen, rather than be unfaithful to the Sacraments of Christ's Church. The time has come when some discipline must be exercised about holy matrimony. The use of our churches for the careless, disgraceful weddings which are so common is a grave scandal. We may not be able to do very much, owing to the circumstances of Establishment, but we can and ought to do what lies in our power. It is a fact that real conversions, with penitence and return to the Sacraments, have come out of firm, courteous, Christian dealing with couples who have been to put in their banns.

(d) *Funerals*.—The dealings of the priest with mourners are in some ways more difficult than any others. It is commonly said that people are very impressionable at a time of bereavement, but I have often found that the bustle of preparation for one of our terrible English funerals, the crowded condition of the house, and all the business of insurance and the rest which surround burial, make it necessary for us to be especially tactful. We must not imagine that just at this time the bereaved can attend to our words. It is better to leave things for a little and return to them after the funeral.

There is one point which often raises a good deal of trouble. People love to have the bodies of their dear ones brought into the church for a requiem, or at least for the burial service. Indeed, there is nothing more touching than to see the body of some humble quiet Christian, who has been accustomed to take the lowest place in church through the whole of his life, now for once, the last time that his body will enter the Church below, occupying the most prominent position in the whole building. The coffin, with its pall and candles, is the first object on which the eyes of anyone coming into the church are sure to fall. This

is strongly felt by our people, and they truly love "to bring him to church" after death. But it is very necessary to draw a line firmly, though with charity. We must restrict this privilege to the bodies of communicants; and if this is so, no exception can be made even in the case of a non-communicant member of a faithful family. It is a salutary though very difficult discipline, and if any suspicion of unfairness creeps in, untold harm may be done, which often is never put right, and comes up fresh at every burial of the same class of person in the neighbourhood. But, again, let all things be done with courtesy.

In this chapter we have been thinking of the very great multitudes of people who are on the margin of the Church, who may be gained or may be lost. For a moment, in some way or another, we have got into touch with them. It is a priceless opportunity. We may send them away hardened and disgusted, actively hostile, when before they were careless, but kindly disposed; or we may lead them the first step on the road of renewal. Often they are good-living, kind-hearted, friendly men and women. We are given the chance of touching hearts which are ripe for the call and

only waiting for the spark to kindle a dormant, religious capacity into active life. The use of the Occasional Offices is full of great possibilities, which are often neglected, and so lost.

CHAPTER XI

THE PLACE OF OBLIGATION IN RELIGION

THE failure of the Church of England as a National Church—indeed, as the Church of any but a small proportion of the nation—is now manifest and acknowledged. One has only to read the statistics of *The Church of England Year Book*, and to see the shrinkage of numbers of Baptisms, Confirmations and Communions progressing through many years, to be deeply saddened. It may perhaps be claimed that the churchmanship of a large number, at least of those who remain faithful to the Church, is of a keener spirit than in the past; but this probably means little more than that we have kept the naturally religious persons and lost the rest. Every kind of effort is now being made by the great central body of churchmen to make up for the failure of the past, though it may well be doubted whether the methods contemplated are the right ones. The Report of the Archbishops' Committee on

Church and State, the programme of the Life and Liberty Movement and the letters of bishops and deans in *The Times* have alike shown a desire to bring the bulk of the nation into the Church again by extending the electoral franchise for Church Council, regardless of the performance or non-performance by the enfranchised persons of the elementary duties of Christianity. Many of us disagree profoundly with this way of getting to work. We feel that those who are making this attempt are evidently hoping to reconvert the nation by nationalising the Church. The danger is that this nationalisation may be gained at the cost of severing the Church of England from historic Catholicism.

This will never do. Conversion on a large scale has always proceeded from convictions strongly held by the converting person or body, and you will not convert England by further weakening the beliefs and practices of an already sufficiently weak Church.

But let us face things as they appear to the priests of the Church of England, who, after all, are in closest touch with the actual facts. Let us take first the country parishes. Is it not true that while here and there you find a flourishing religion and good congregations

at the parish church, together with a high proportion of communicants, yet this is very much the exception and not the rule? In church after church in the country districts the congregations are lamentably thin, and the communicants miserably few, even at Easter. Not a few parishes exist in which there is not a single man communicant. Every kind of excuse is made by priests and people for this state of things: agricultural conditions, the special needs of animals, bedding, milking and the rest are supposed to account for it. Yet I have in mind two country villages quite near to one another in which the circumstances are exactly the same. Both are purely agricultural, both have their resident priest, in both the necessities of farm work are exactly the same. The one is entirely Church of England, and here the men, almost without exception, say that it is impossible for them to get to church, either for Communion or for worship in the morning, owing to the conditions of their work. The other village is predominantly Roman Catholic, with a comparatively new chapel in it. Here the great majority of the men are able to hear Mass every Sunday, and the chapel is full. There are also cases in which

the same thing obtains in the same village : the Roman Catholics in the village find it possible to be present at Mass, the Anglicans do not. I make no comment at this point, but I remember also Church of England parishes where there has been a fairly long Anglo-Catholic tradition, and where things are as happy as in the Roman Catholic cases I have quoted ; where the men do, in fact, get to church on a Sunday morning and where the proportion of communicants to the population is large. The fact remains, however, that in innumerable country parishes the condition of religion is deplorable ; the people are inert and unresponsive, and the priest has lost heart. And no wonder ; it is not from unfaithfulness on his part in very many cases. I have in mind a parish in which an excellent priest of moderate views has worked for twenty years. He was seldom away, he visited diligently month in, month out, he knew his people, every one of them, intimately ; and yet the Sunday congregations and the communicant roll were depressing in the extreme. Can it be wondered at that these priests grow unhappy and restless ? Indeed, it is pitiful for a brother priest from a happy town parish to go and visit his friends in the country. It is

the same sad story over and over again : " What can I do ? How can I stir the people ? Nothing that I can say or do seems to make the least difference. I get some of the boys and girls to Confirmation, and for a time they stay, but one after another they drop off. Public opinion is too strong for them."

Not long ago I heard a bishop of a great country diocese say that most of his priests wanted to leave their parishes and go elsewhere. Could there be a stronger condemnation of Church of England methods than this ?

And if this is true of the country parishes, is it so very different in many of our towns ? Again I have in mind not one or two, but groups of parishes adjoining one another in our great cities, which are in a truly sad condition. The Sunday morning congregation is made up chiefly of children, with a few specially devout grown-up people. The evening congregations may be a little larger, but fifty or sixty persons in church from a parish of many thousands is considered good. The communicants are few, the Confirmation candidates are far fewer, and in only too many parishes a continual shrinkage is going on. What is the reason of it all ? In some cases,

no doubt, the priest has lost heart and given up trying. In others he does not live among his people and therefore little can be expected. Sometimes he has driven his congregation away through tactlessness or failure to do his work ; sometimes, unhappily, there is a moral scandal of some kind. But these causes do not wholly account for the facts. I know parishes well, both in town or country, where the priest is a faithful worker and a man of prayer, who is giving himself whole-heartedly to his self-denying labours, and still outward results are small.

Here it is necessary to say a word about parishes which are being run on Catholic lines ; where the Mass is the chief Sunday service and where confession is urged upon the people ; where all that can be done is done faithfully, according to the Catholic method, and therefore where it might be expected, according to our theories, that there ought to be a real spiritual revival and something like success. Yet still, progress is very slow. The congregations are little larger than in the previous Evangelical or moderate days of the parish, and this though we are so often told that the Catholic religion is the only one which will ever convert England ! This condition of Catholic

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parishes is often pointed at as a proof of the instinctive dislike of English men and women for the faith.

But two things are worth noting. First, that in many places the method is quite new and revolutionary. There are three hundred and fifty years of arrears to be made up, and though probably a movement begins very soon, it must begin in a small way. It is only possible at first to form a small nucleus of convinced Catholics; and even when this is formed the process of reaching numbers must be very slow. So long as the right spirit is at the centre, results must follow in time, and there is no need to be discouraged if progress at first is slow.

And, secondly, atmosphere and tradition, as is well known, are of incalculable importance in the growth of a good religious spirit. Priests working in well-known Catholic parishes are often told half grumblingly by their brethren in newer centres: "Of course, you can do these things, because you have a great tradition behind you; we cannot do them because we have no such tradition." But how was the tradition formed? Just by faithful, fearless Catholic priests beginning in a very small way, and patiently through years

extending their work and strengthening their faithful. When Father James Pollock first came to what is now St Alban's parish, he found what was described by one of the trustees as "nothing but dirt, disease and sin." Yet there is no doubt of the atmosphere and tradition of St Alban's to-day.

It may be that these considerations do not come very gracefully from one in my thrice-blessed position to those who are struggling bravely to create the Catholic atmosphere in difficult surroundings. But history repeats itself. St Peter's, London Docks, St Alban's, Holborn, St Alban's, Birmingham, were depressing enough in their first stages. Now they have great traditions which make the work, though immense, very delightful. It may well be taken as an encouragement that pioneer work now being done by many a priest in circumstances of profound difficulty, so far as outward things are concerned, is laying the foundation of a magnificent spiritual building for the days to come.

Yet the fact remains that, though obvious success is being achieved in some places, the general outlook on the Church of England is not happy. If it be thought that what has been written so far in this chapter is pessimistic,

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I ask my readers to cast their thoughts over their own neighbourhood, whether it be country or town, and to ask themselves whether in truth all is well. At least let us face the facts, and be thankful that this salutary point of view is being taken by the Church of England in these days as never before.

So we find much failure. But let us go further back and, leaving the phenomena as we see them, inquire a little further into causes by which they have been produced. There are many, of course, and many volumes have been written to deal with some or all of them. One, however, seems to many of us to be fundamental. It is difficult to see historically just when the Church of England first dropped the idea of obligation in the life of religion. No doubt the process was very gradual. When the Prayer Book was first drawn up, it was apparently thought unnecessary to state that the obligation of hearing Mass on Sundays and certain holy days was binding on all Church people. No doubt it was taken for granted. But one other fundamental obligation of immemorial antiquity, that of going to confession before Communion if in a state of mortal sin, and in any case at

least once a year, was so weakened that it very soon ceased to be recognised at all. The statements of obligation in religious matters in the Prayer Book are few indeed. No doubt the idea still remains in the matter of Baptism and Confirmation, and accounts for the popularity of at least the former of these Sacraments among people who understand little or nothing about them, and who are not making the slightest profession of the Christian life. We have, too, the rubric in the Communion Service, which insists that every parishioner shall communicate at least three times in the year, of which Easter shall be one. But in general it is true to say that the foundation failure of the Church of England is that she has ceased to convince the mass of her people that the practice of religion is a duty binding on Christians ; that it is a matter of life and death. There is no need to labour the fact, brought out by the war, that, taking England and Wales together, ninety per cent. of our soldiers and sailors entered themselves as members of the Church of England, and that the vast majority of these not only were ignorant of the foundations of religion, many of them not even knowing the facts of our Lord's life, but that they were not even

pretending to live as members of the Church. God knows it is not their fault, or only to a small extent, in many cases. Most of them are brave, chivalrous and intensely attractive. Many of them have profound spiritual possibilities which have never been drawn out. Almost all of them, if they had been brought up in a vital system of religious faith and practice, would be far better and stronger men than they are, with instincts and impulses disciplined, and with a knowledge of the way of renewal for the fallen of which they are perfectly ignorant.

It is not only the soldiers who have lost the sense of obligation of religion. Every parish priest is burdened all the time by the sense of the multitudes of men and women in his parish, be it ever so well worked, who are utterly untouched by anything more than a vague and weak consciousness of the presence among them of a religion of which they know nothing. The priest passes through the streets as he comes back from his Sunday Mass and thinks that in some of these streets he could almost count the communicants on the fingers of his hands. And the people are conscious of no loss. It never occurs to them that organised religion has any claim on them ;

they have lost all sense of obligation, and with it very much of the sense of sin.

I am convinced that very much of this heartrending loss has been caused by the haziness and want of grip of the Church of England method as it has come to be worked out, or, as we may rather say, as it has staggered on during the last three hundred years. What are we to do to make things better?

The Idea of Obligation.—Our people, as it seems to me, fall roughly into two divisions, those to whom the religious instinct has been granted, and those to whom apparently—it is the foundation mystery of a priest's thoughts—the religious instinct has not been given. We have in our congregations some few of the former, though they are only the very few, even of the naturally religious; and many of them remain true even to the most invertebrate religious system. It is wonderful to see how they can develop when the atmosphere becomes spiritually more intense.

But what about the others? Those people, I mean, who appear not to be naturally Christian in any real sense of the word; who seem to have few or no spiritual perceptions, for whom worship has no attraction, who can

give up praying, even though they have been taught to pray, with little regret, hardly seeming to feel any loss at all ; who are ready at any moment to sacrifice their religion, or any part of it, if it conflicts with their pleasure or their prosperity. They seem to have no genius for religion at all. If they pray, it is as a duty, or because it has become a habit. If they come to church, it is for the same inadequate reasons. If they live moral lives, it is at best because they have few temptations—a condition which often goes with the non-religious temperament — or from self-regarding motives. If these preservatives are absent they are likely to cast off all restraints whatever and to live according to their impulses. In either case they become indifferent to religion and swell the ranks of the respectable heathen or the moral and spiritual wrecks.

Let us take for purposes of study our Confirmation candidates in a normally worked parish. They give in their names, or their names are given in for them by some energetic teacher or district visitor, and they come to their first class. The priest watches their faces as he instructs them ; some are listening with all their power ; they are really and

deeply interested. If a question is asked, up go half-a-dozen hands, and the answer, right or wrong, comes out directly ; they are attracted by religion and it comes naturally to them.

But then there are the others. They come to the class, and they sit there patiently—or at least their impatience is only seen in an eye wandering round to the pictures, or the windows, or the clock. It takes something quite special, an anecdote or the raising of your voice, to arrest their attention, and then off it goes again. They may fade away from the class altogether, or (as they often do) they come through and get confirmed and receive their First Communion. But it is a perpetual struggle to keep them up ; they have to be held, and held tight, if they are to remain in any sense practising members of the Church. Multitudes of them are now lost by the Church of England who could be held, and their lives fundamentally changed, their souls and bodies strengthened in temptation, and the habits of prayer awakened and fostered in them, by a wise, spiritual direction. But this is just what the present method of the Church of England is failing to do. Her lack of sureness of touch, which paralyses her efforts, her hesitation to

go deep into the individual lives of those entrusted to her care, her terror of heroic methods, have nullified all her dealings with people of this kind. And so she has failed. Moderation in spiritual method has lamentably ruined the religion of England. What is to be done?

At this point we are bound to look carefully at the way in which the historical Catholic Church throughout the world has approached the same problem, which is as wide as human nature itself. She recognises the trouble ; she sees that these souls are weak and tempted, and find it intensely difficult to understand or to be interested in the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Faith. She sees that they have no deep spiritual perceptions, that they find prayer difficult, and worship rather dull. The magnificence of the Mass has little appeal for them ; most sermons bore them, and a walk in the suburbs, or their own fireside, is infinitely more attractive than church. And yet they never doubt that they are Christians, and that they believe in God, and that they belong to the Church. Many of them would regard it as a stigma not to have been baptized. They have a vague, instinctive sense of the duty of prayer, if not of public worship—

that is to say, those who at least in youth have been brought into touch with the Church. It is possible to save them from yielding to impulse and falling into sin. Indeed, it is possible to do much more than this. They can be trained, if a wise method is used, into the condition of faithful, obedient Catholics.

But they need a strong hand and a strict rule, which they must regard as binding on them, and any falling away from which they must be taught to consider as sin. Therefore, the Church lays upon them a simple but obligatory rule of life, which they are bound to regard as the minimum of the practice of the Christian life.

We can take Baptism for granted, as not being in most cases an act of personal, conscious obedience; but in the earliest days worship must be laid down as a duty. Our people have to be taught that all Christian Catholics must hear Mass once every Sunday, and on certain great holy days which come in the week, and which keep them in touch with the central events and ideas of the faith. The need of instruction for the young is supplied by the Catechism, while for the older it is contained, at least in essence, in the sermon at Mass. Further, there must be an under-

standing, as full as can be produced, of the way of repentance and renewal after sin. Therefore, regular Confession is regarded as part of the Christian life, not occasionally or "when you feel the need," but as a normal habit of life, though not always or in every case necessary before each Communion. This is not a tyranny; it is a necessity for innumerable souls who otherwise would almost certainly fall away through utter discouragement in the battle against temptation and sin.

The strengthening and refreshing of the soul in Holy Communion naturally follows, and again it is generally necessary to lay down a rule for Communion, which can be modified under direction. The battle against sin and the effort after growth in grace are implied throughout this method. Religion is not regarded merely as a moral-producing force; but worship, penitence and prayer, as they become the deep-set habits of the life, do inevitably and all the time raise the ethical ideals.

It is something of this kind, a rule, simple, obligatory and obviously for the good of souls, which is deeply needed in England. Men and women, in fact, do respond to it wonderfully. Through its influence innumerable boys and

girls, who would otherwise be lost in the difficult years of bodily and spiritual development, are kept faithful, not only to religion, but also to outward and inward decency of life ; and, once they are well grounded in these elements of religion, they will not easily go from it. " Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it."

There are two objections which are commonly brought against this method by clergy and people who mistrust it. The one is the danger of formalism. It is said : " You are giving people a minimum, and practically encouraging them to be content with that. You tell them that if they hear Mass on Sunday and go to Confession and receive Communion occasionally, and rattle off, as they so often do, a certain number of prayers each morning and evening, that they are all right." This is regarded by many people as a grave danger to the future of English religion.

And the second objection follows from this, and is far more serious. We are continually told that in Roman Catholic countries where this method is most closely followed—some include also the Eastern Church under the same condemnation—you get religion divorced

from morals—that is to say, you find many people who fulfil their religious duties with pretty fair regularity and yet live unsavoury lives. “This man goes to Mass and beats his wife when he gets home.” “This woman goes to confession and is always quarrelling with her neighbours.” “Even the priest sometimes gets drunk and nobody minds very much, provided he can administer the Sacraments with sufficient outward decency.”

I believe that many of these matters are grossly exaggerated, probably quite unconsciously, by those who wish to belittle Roman Catholicism. Certainly what I know of Roman Catholic countries by no means bears it out; though unhappily there are scandals in all branches of the Catholic Church, both among clergy and laity. But let us take England, which, after all, is our business, and the field of our inquiry. Few people to-day will be found who deny that among all the Christian denominations in England the one which has the greatest proportion of really devout Christians among its people is Roman Catholicism. There are lapsed Romans, as there are lapsed members of every religious body, but the general level is remarkably high, and it is generally true to say that

lapsed Romans are more easily recovered than members of other religions.

And as regards formalism. Well, that is in our hands. It is not the habit of the average Englishman to pretend to a virtue which he has not ; indeed, he is far more likely to give up the practice of religion simply because he cannot live up to an ideal which he does not at all understand, but which he believes is demanded of all religious persons. Put before him a plain and simple rule of life, which he feels at once is not impossible, and you are likely to be able to get him on to a point in the spiritual life which he never could have reached if he had not begun with the minimum.

On the other hand, we are all learning to accept discipline to an extent we never dreamed of before the war. A chaplain writing from the Front says that : " Authority is absolutely essential in a service born and bred to the giving and receiving of orders." Many chaplains speak of the " very loose hold of the Church of England on boys and young men." " The Church has lost touch with large numbers of her young men, though they are not devoid of the religious spirit in numbers of cases." " The Church of England suffers from the fact that it is the denomination most

vague in its demands upon its members.” “The Church has failed to teach that she is a Society with rules,” and so the churchman, however young, is unconscious of discipline or authority and too easily slips away.

And what is true of the army is true of all of us. We are not likely to divorce religion and morals ; at least, we have a magnificent opportunity of adopting a first-rate method of dealing with souls among a people who, whatever their actual life may be, have a strong moral sense which only needs spiritualising.

But we must teach all our people that religion does matter as well as morals, that it is an affair of life and death, and that it is a discipline by accepting which they will become cleaner and stronger, as well as more spiritual men and women. When we have taught our people the sense of elementary duty in spiritual things, we shall be able to go forward from that base to lead them from strength to strength, kindling in them, through the fire of the Holy Spirit, fresh powers of prayer and communion with God.

CHAPTER XII

ATMOSPHERE

THE atmosphere of Catholicism is one of the strongest forces in the world. A right spiritual atmosphere will do more than the most eloquent preaching or the most perfect organisation to form and edify souls and to lead them to God ; while an atmosphere which is vitiated by slackness, timidity, half-heartedness, scandal or uncharity, or by any other of the many troubles which are capable of spoiling it, is fatal to the growth of souls in grace. There are, indeed, those holy people who will perfect their spiritual life in spite of all discouragements ; but most of us are greatly dependent on the spiritual surroundings in which our life passes.

In a healthy Catholic atmosphere souls develop quickly and attain to great heights of sanctity ; there is a pervading sense of prayer and reverence and the recollection of God's Presence ; the movements of the Spirit are unrestrained and meet with a quick response.

In such an atmosphere unpleasantnesses, such as will arise in the best-regulated congregations, quickly evaporate, for there is nothing to foster them. A healthy vigour pervades all the work, and is the sure source of growth in devotion and the spread of the Kingdom of God.

What do We Want?

What is the atmosphere we want to have in our Catholic churches, and how is it produced and fostered? We want a palpable atmosphere such as we recognise in historical Catholicism throughout the world; we want it because we believe that of all spiritual forces it is the best and most perfect, and the one most capable of developing the spiritual lives of the greatest number of men and women. We believe that it is less dependent on passing events and differences of temperament than other religious systems, and, above all, that it appeals both to the weak and sinful and to the wise and prudent.

But it is not only for this reason that we want it; we know that no great movement ever began and prospered without an intense glow of conviction at the hearts of the people at the centre; but we know, too, that no

movement ever spread far which was not extensive as well as intensive, missionary as well as devout. And therefore we seek to create an atmosphere in which even personal devotion is not all. Catholics have often been tempted to look upon personal devotion as the end of all their efforts ; of course, it is not so. The establishment of the Kingdom is the end, and devotion is partly one of the results of the Kingdom, and partly the equipment for further conquests. We must have the right atmosphere, but we must remember that when we have got the atmosphere we have begun, not done.

It is this kind of ideal that we want so sorely in the Church of England. It should be the aim of the Catholic body to provide everywhere centres of keen devotion to Our Lord in His Church and Sacraments which will be focuses in which the fire burns bright and strong, so that they may be attractions to those outside ; centres, also, from which there is a continual succession of missionaries going out, whether into the streets and lanes of their own parish or to greater distances than that ; men and women so strongly convinced of the saving truth of what they believe, and so free from doubt or timidity,

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that their very presence preaches the Catholic Gospel.

If this is to be so, we must begin at the centre and train our missionaries before they are sent out, and their training must be solid. Therefore, in this chapter we shall be considering various means by which to create the atmosphere we want. In some sense every chapter of the book has the same aim in view ; but just now matters will be dealt with which are more particularly concerned with the home atmosphere of the actual church and parish in which we desire to bring into being that sense of devotion which will, of itself, work for the spread of the Kingdom. Let us take some of them in order, and, if the way of going to work seems even more scrappy than the rest of the book, it must be realised that this is simply caused by the necessity of the case ; my object being, as I want to repeat once again, merely to supply headings and suggest lines of thought and action which may be followed up.

I. RESERVATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Controversy is raging fiercely round us just now in regard to this outstanding point of

Catholic devotion. I am not going to enter into that controversy at all ; let the Church newspapers and magazines ring with it as they will, facts remain. Let people talk as they will about the danger of "localising the Presence," and about tendencies to materialise the Sacrament, and all the rest ; and still it is true that in churches where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved openly and publicly, in such a way that the Tabernacle is visible by the faithful—for that is what "access" means—you will find the door opening and shutting all day. There you will see business men and women, schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, people of leisure and working people, soldiers back from the Front, little children, happy people and unhappy people, those who are far on in the spiritual life and those who are just beginning the struggle against sin, coming in one by one for a few quiet minutes in the realised Presence of Jesus. These are the churches which really are the homes of the people, where you find an irresistible appeal, and a warmth and gladness which, whatever may be the arguments brought against them, are unique in their power. They are indescribable, but they are there, and fill the whole atmosphere of the place.

2. DEVOTION TO OUR LADY

The atmosphere of a church is greatly affected by the way in which the claims of the Mother of God on the devotion of Christians are treated in it. I am not proposing to enter into the astonishing condition of mind regarding her which for centuries distinguished the whole Church of England, for it seems clear to me that what is plainly stated in Holy Scripture, or can be understood from it without doing the smallest violence to fact, justifies all the honour which the undivided Church paid to her, and which is still paid by the churches of the East and West. The Hail Mary is so simple and natural a devotion, and one so entirely consistent with evangelical Christianity, that it is hard to see why anybody should find themselves unable to say it. No doubt a great part of the difficulty is due to age-long prejudice, springing from non-theological, popular excesses in long past days in England. Wherever it is reintroduced in English congregations to-day, it is accepted at once by the great majority of devout and instructed Catholics. The popularity of the cult of Our Lady can surprise nobody; it is founded in the deepest instincts of the human

heart and the first impulses of the Christian consciousness ; it is evident at once to any person who enters a Catholic church of the Eastern or the Western obedience. The large congregations when Vespers of Our Lady are sung, and the enthusiasm with which the hymns " go," are due, not merely to the fact that they are new to us, nor to the other fact that opposition always creates keenness, but to the natural reaching forth of the Christian heart towards the Mother of the Saviour. And even if it should be true that popular devotion sometimes outruns the limits of theological exactness, the Church can always call it back again into the orthodox channel. Moreover, it may be urged that some slight excess of devotion is better than the cold terror of the traditional Church of England whenever the name of Mary is mentioned.

But we must be practical. Most of us are dealing with poor and simple people ; if they are to be taught to love Our Lady, they must not only hear sermons in which the theory of the invocation of the Mother of God is set forth ; they must be allowed to say together publicly, in church, the Hail Mary ; and all of it, not a part. If some of our people hesitate at first, they are soon conquered by the warm

attractiveness of loving her and asking her prayers to God for them. A simpler way still is to provide an image of her with the Holy Child in her arms in every church; not a white stone statue in the reredos, or in some far-away part of the decoration of the church, but a good and beautiful (really beautiful) coloured image, say in painted oak, standing in some obvious and easily accessible part of the church. Opportunity should be given for the offering of votive candles and flowers, to be given by the children and those who possess child-like hearts.

The change in the atmosphere of a church is immediate and unmistakable whenever the cult of the Mother of God is introduced.

3. THE INVOCATION OF SAINTS

Our churches ought to be for our people in a true sense the meeting-places of earth and heaven, homes in which the sense of the supernatural is strong and compelling. There is no doubt about the truth of this in churches where there is perpetual Reservation; but it is also greatly fostered by the practice of the Invocation of Saints. It is astonishing that this, too, should be a storm centre of bitter

controversy ; that Bishops should feel themselves bound to forbid it, and even that many devout Christians not merely do not use it (which I can understand), but even feel themselves bound to oppose and stigmatise as disloyal those who do (which I cannot understand). Even the simple saying of the Hail Mary seems to terrify numbers of people so much that it has been found necessary to produce expurgated versions of the Rosary for Church of England use !

Am I unreasonable in being frankly unable to comprehend this point of view ? I can understand Bishops and others not finding any help in the Hail Mary themselves, but I view with amazement their efforts to prevent others, as devout as themselves, from using such a prayer in their parish churches. It is beyond doubt that the practice of the Invocation of Saints does very greatly warm and enrich the spiritual life of many faithful souls, both well-educated and uneducated, and that it does bring the sense of the closeness of " All the Company of Heaven " into our hearts. It seems to me that it is incredibly intolerant and short-sighted of our authorities to attempt to make it to cease, even if they could do so. If it be argued that the Prayer Book and the

general spirit of the formularies of the Church of England are against it, then it is high time that the Prayer Book and the formularies of the Church of England were widened so far as to include it. This is one of those cases in which the needs of prayer have outstripped "the genius of the Church of England." Is it wise in her to fight against what she will most certainly accept sooner or later? She has lost, and is losing, many of her best and keenest children simply because she will not move fast enough along the road she will take when it may be too late. The practice of the Invocation of Our Lady and the Saints cannot be stopped; like so many other Catholic practices it has come to stay; and if it is summarily repressed in one place, it will immediately break out in two others. Is it too much to ask for toleration for an outlet of human devotion which is so great a help in creating that atmosphere of warm religion which is just what England so sorely needs?

4. THE USE OF THE ROSARY

I am by no means a competent psychologist, but I have read enough in that branch of study to have become convinced that the

Rosary is a particularly scientific way of saying my prayers. I find that there are two parts of my mind which are employed, or ought to be kept employed, while I am trying to pray—my consciousness and my subconsciousness. I do my best to keep the actual subject of my prayer or meditation fixed in my consciousness, in such a manner that my spiritual powers may dwell upon it undisturbed. But I find, when I try to do this, that all kinds of irrelevant matters keep on pushing up out of my subconsciousness, and getting in the way of or driving out that on which I am trying specially to dwell. This is the well-known and deplorable phenomenon called distraction in prayer. It seems, then, that if this trouble is to be overcome I must provide my subconsciousness, or the margin of my mind, whichever we call it—I mean that part of my mind which is neither fully conscious nor fully unconscious—with something to do. It must be occupied profitably in such a way as to prevent it from interfering with that idea which is attempting to keep in undisturbed possession of my consciousness.

Psychologists, such as William James, tell us of various ways of doing this. One man who had very great powers of concentration

in prayer was accustomed, while praying, to fix his eyes on the vane which capped the spire of a neighbouring church ; another tells us that when in church he could keep his attention from wandering by looking at some object in the east window ; in this way they assisted their efforts after quick and concentrated attention. Some people find they can pray well while moving about ; others even while knitting, or engaging in some other work which makes little demand on the thoughts. In every case the idea is to keep the subconsciousness employed, in order that the consciousness may be preserved from invasion by irrelevant ideas. But why should not the subconsciousness be used actually for praying ? Surely this would be the happiest of all solutions of the problem ? And this is just what the Rosary is meant to do. You fix your consciousness on some event of Our Lord's life, such as the Annunciation, or the Crucifixion or Resurrection. At the same time you give your subconsciousness prayers to say—the Our Father, or Hail Mary, or Gloria. Even the fingering of the beads is a help in keeping the subconsciousness fixed and still during meditation. Thus both consciousness and subconsciousness are being used in the

best possible way and in the direct service of prayer.

Moreover, the Rosary has the outstanding merit that it is a method of prayer which is an enormous help to the poor and simple. The fact that the Public Worship Committee seriously considered and recommended a Rosary-like devotion is illuminating as showing the advance of the Church of England in this matter. The Report says: "A chaplain writes: 'Contact with all and sundry of British manhood has revealed a crying need that people are in for a simple form of devotion known from childhood, the common and familiar possession of all. This would indeed be a godsend to the Church.' In the meantime the Committee desires to call attention to the help which has been found by simple people in the use of a devotion known as the Chaplet of Prayer. These consist in meditations upon the events of Our Lord's life, with prayers repeated at intervals. These would be suited for ordinary use and not merely for special seasons and occasions, and would provide a form or principle for private devotion." Here the idea of the Rosary is openly accepted; is it too much to conjecture that only the fear of Rome may have restrained the Committee

from the use of the word itself? For it is the word which frightens people in the Church of England who have never heard the Rosary being said, but who have been brought up to regard it with a horror they might find it difficult to justify if they were cross-examined on the question. When shall we learn that the Roman Catholic Church really has a great number of valuable things to teach us about prayer which the Church of England would be well advised to study?

And if it be said that it really is absurd to attempt to create the Catholic atmosphere by such things as the Rosary, which, after all, are details, I would answer that the popularity and effectiveness of the Rosary in the Roman Church, and the firm hold it has on the hearts of the simplest Christians, prove that it is a potent instrument in that training of people in the power of prayer which is the essence of the spirit we desire to create.

5. THE SERVICE OF THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

There is another service unknown to the Prayer Book which is highly popular, and very powerful in converting souls, and which

greatly helps to produce an atmosphere of penitence and love of the Cross. Not long ago "Lantern Services" were used in many of our churches, more especially in Lent and on Good Friday, by all "Schools of Thought." Indeed, they are still found effective, though their first vigour has perhaps died away. The Stations of the Cross is a service of the same kind, which has been found to be much more permanent in its appeal. Anyone who has seen it properly done knows the profound solemnity of it when conducted by a priest who loves Our Lord and understands the needs of his people. The procession round the church, the touching verses sung between the Stations, the appealing hymns and penitential devotions, the series of short, pointed homilies or meditations, in which so many things can be said directly and informally which it would be more difficult to say in a set sermon; above all, the fact that everything groups round the Passion, and every lesson is drawn from it—all this, on a week night in Lent, or at any time in the year; greatest of all, perhaps, on Palm Sunday night or on Good Friday—produces an indescribable effect on those who come to the service. Before the war, in a great parish well known to me, there

used to be a dancing class for church boys and girls on the Monday nights in the winter. When Lent came the class was given up, and the young people came to the Stations of the Cross instead. I know well that great things have happened in many lives on those Monday nights in Lent.

Moreover, the preacher is not the person who profits least from the Stations of the Cross. It is difficult to prepare a series of fourteen short discourses on the Way of the Passion without being oneself deepened in penitence and love of Our Lord.

Two practical things must be said while on the subject. First, it is downright cruelty to go on interminably at the Stations ; the whole thing, from beginning to end, ought to be over within the hour ; if this is not so, most of the good effect gained in the hour will be undone in the extra time. In town parishes the service must of necessity begin late if people are to get there at all after their work. They ought to be allowed to get away early. And, secondly, I have never been able to fathom the minds of those good people who object to some of the Stations on the ground that they are traditional and not Scriptural. Some years ago a young priest was suddenly

compelled, by the illness of his incumbent, to undertake for the first time the preaching of the Stations of the Cross through the streets of a working-class parish. Seeing a priest of age and experience in the church, he appealed to him for help ; it was gladly and kindly offered, and the young priest asked his elder to preach, among others, on the 4th Station (Our Lord meeting His Mother on the way to Calvary). The older priest gravely replied that he had never heard that Our Lord met His Mother on the way to Calvary and could not preach on that Station ! Now, not one in a thousand of the people who come to the Stations of the Cross, with a view to the edification of their souls, would ever dream of troubling their heads as to whether certain of the events commemorated are actually Scriptural, or whether they come down to us as immemorial traditions of the Church. And, really, what does it matter ? They come to enter into the Passion of Our Lord, and not to bother about the relative merits of Scripture and tradition.

It should be added here, for those who have not realised the fact, that the devotion of the Stations of the Cross can be made at any time privately ; the service is to be found in

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Catholic Prayers, and many other books of devotion.

6. THE GENERAL APPEARANCE OF THE CHURCH

It is hardly necessary to insist that the look of the parish church, the building and its adornments, has much to do with its atmosphere. This is fully realised by the Public Worship Committee, whose Report has the following words :—“ The Committee has considered carefully the question of the use of the churches outside the hours of worship. It seems hardly necessary to urge that churches should be kept open during the day ; this is now very common. But a great deal of the advantage of the open church is lost if it has all the appearance of being closed, if entrance is only possible by some side door discoverable by research, and if the church itself presents a dreary and uninhabited appearance. Churches should be constantly, obviously and hospitably open. When used for service the seats should be free, unless in some places it might seem desirable to make provision for the infirm or the deaf. Strangers should be made welcome ; prayer-books and hymn-

books being provided for their use. The congregation should be encouraged to feel themselves responsible for the proper maintenance of the fabric and the various appointments of the church, and no effort should be spared to make the aspect of the church beautiful and homely. The English Church has lost a great deal by the disappearance of the spirit which leads to votive offerings ; it is probable that the war will have the effect in many places of reviving this, and such revival should be welcomed. The Committee recommends that adequate provision should be made for private prayer and devotional reading in all churches, and that a table of suitable literature should be provided."

"Beautiful and homely." Who has not shuddered at the vast expanses of unrelieved grey, white or red walls in the interior of so many English churches, broken only by bad stained windows or that horror known as "Cathedral Glass" ? I suppose that in the towns there must be some opacity in the windows to keep out the hideous sights and buildings of modern great cities ; but in the country it is surely different. Anyone who has looked out of the plain glass windows of a country church into a grove of trees, or at

a line of distant hills, or over a rich and wide river valley, has thanked in his heart the wise men who were responsible for the glazing, and forbore to give us stained windows of the age of 1845 !

But it is not only the windows ; bad iron-work, hideous upholstery, jejune ornamentation of all sorts crowd our churches ; who is not familiar with them ? And we are the people who cry out so bitterly against the " tawdriness " of Continental churches ! If they are not beautiful, according to our canons of taste, at least they are homely, and the people are very evidently at home in them.

It is not for me to offer advice to my fellow-incumbents on the subject of stained glass or altar frontals ; we are besieged with good and bad counsel in the advertisement and other columns of the Church newspapers. Surely, however, we all realise how good an effect can be produced by a fine set of Stations of the Cross, and by other good pictures well placed in our churches ; by the crucifix over the pulpit, and the Calvary in a quiet corner ; by the holy water stoup near the door, and by a few big, bold images ; not pink and gold plaster of Paris abominations, but good

coloured wood or stone. These will do wonders by way of making the church "beautiful and homely," especially if the "spirit which leads to votive offerings" mentioned already is fostered and allowed expression. It is one thing to see candles lighted and burning which have been paid for out of the churchwardens' accounts, and quite another to buy one yourself, light it and say your simple prayer at the same time. Some priests have hesitated to encourage this kind of thing, fearing that it would arouse Protestant opposition and would not "catch on." But they may comfort themselves with the approval given by so official a body as the Public Worship Committee; while they will find that, if the opportunity is given, it is eagerly accepted by their people, and in a short time becomes exceedingly popular. It gives them a new sense of homeliness and personal possession in their parish church.

There are a hundred ways in which devotion may be fostered by a wise use of the fabric of the church, which do indeed beautify it and make it homely. But there is that dreadful faculty law always in the background; what are we to do with it? I confess I do not

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know ; it stands in the way everywhere. If we defy it and put things in without a faculty, we get into trouble, and chancellors and other authorities rage against us ; and the trouble is that the very things we want most are just those that we are not allowed to have. A new pew for the squire is gladly permitted, and a faculty issued immediately ; but apply for an inscription asking prayers for the soul of a faithful Christian, or to be allowed to put up a statue of Our Lord in His Mother's arms, and every power in the diocese is arrayed against us ! The kindest and best of the Bishops say they are powerless and can do little or nothing for us ! I should mention that in the diocese of Birmingham a working arrangement has been made in the case of certain less important ornaments.

7. ATTITUDE OF THE CLERGY TOWARDS THEIR PEOPLE

Dare I write that an absolute necessity of a true atmosphere in a church and parish is that the priests should be kind to their people ? I will venture greatly, and put down one or two things which have come home to me in my own and other parishes. How often the

priest uses much of his time in the pulpit in pouring out invectives on his people : I have heard sermons preached on Easter Sunday morning, scolding those members of the congregation who had not been to confession before their Easter Communion. No doubt they ought to have been ; but is the morning of Easter Day the time to say so ? I sometimes think that the mention of confession ought to " go out " in Eastertide like Alleluia at Septuagesima. The scolding habit grows so quickly and so unrecognised among us clergy that often we do not know we are doing it. And yet it soon ruins the happy atmosphere of our church, and hopelessly depresses our congregation and ourselves. One of my churchwardens said to me some years ago : " If you want us to give our money, you must tell us how wonderfully generous we are ! " There is a deep truth in this saying, which goes very far beyond the matter of the collections. I am sure that if we want our people to be good and happy we must sometimes praise them from the pulpit ; then they are much more ready to take reproof kindly when it is necessary.

And the Vicar's Letter in the parish magazine. Some magazines, month after month,

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come out with letters which contain little but lamentation and mourning and woe. Surely it is better to point out, for instance, before next Lent, the failures of the one just past and to exhort the faithful *then* to better things, rather than to devote the Easter Letter to a scolding for neglects which, after all, are past, and cannot be made up for nearly another year.

I am sure it is the duty of the parish priest to be cheerful, or, if he has to rebuke, to do it vigorously, and then forget all about it (or pretend to) and be happy again. It is no use playing the martyr because people do not do what we ask them, or even if they are not always perfectly kind to us. The best friends in the world cannot "keep our end up" for us if we will not do it for ourselves. Some of the best work in the world has been done by men who knew how to cover up a heavy heart under a cheerful countenance ; and, moreover, it is quite wonderful how the cheerful face does really in time lighten the heart.

The priest who decides that his people have hearts of stone, or are hopelessly obstinate, or utterly flabby, and treats them on this understanding, will never get far into their hearts. And the other priest, who always wears a

depressed face, and speaks and preaches in a despondent voice, quickly depresses his people. "Like people, like priest." A priest who is cheerful, tender, holy, will soon make his people like himself, and the atmosphere of the parish will be full of kindness and zeal.

But there ; I have proclaimed more than once that I was not out to lecture my brethren, and I heartily beg their pardon if I have been led on to do it. And yet there is one matter of kindness to our people which cannot be left untouched. It does seem to me to be most unkind to keep a congregation of working people, who have just half-an-hour to hear Mass on a weekday, waiting for five minutes or more because the celebrating priest is unpunctual. Surely all services, on Sunday and weekday, ought to begin to the minute. In one great parish church with which I have some acquaintance the only difference between the clergy on this point is that one of them begins his Mass on the first stroke of the clock and the others on the last !

So about hearing confessions ; in any case, when there are many penitents, some must have a long time to wait, and ten or fifteen minutes added to the time is a very heavy

trial. Some priests wisely arrive a few minutes before the advertised hour and begin early, so that their penitents may not have long to wait.

8. FEARLESSNESS AND VIGOUR

People do like to know "what it is all about." When it is necessary to make changes in the services, or other parts of the life of the parish, nothing is lost and everything is gained by a frank, full and reasoned explanation. Courage always impresses Englishmen. If a move is true and right, it cannot be too openly done or too fearlessly defended. Caution may sometimes be necessary, but timidity, which masks itself under the name of caution, is unimpressive. Boldness and enthusiasm are great qualities in a parish priest.

Finally, a word on the use of certain terms in ordinary speech and in preaching and giving out notices. In English Catholic churches words are used which shock the unaccustomed worshipper ; words, the use of which is rather strongly deprecated by many people as having controversial associations. Why should the word " Mass," for instance, be so constantly

used when it notoriously scandalises so many good Church people? Well, just because it is the Catholic word for the Catholic service. The word, either way, cannot alter facts, any more than men's belief and disbelief can alter Divine truth; but the use of the word emphasises the fact that this is the Catholic service throughout the world, a worship which is the same thing wherever the Church of Christ exists. It makes people understand that what is done at Rome, at Moscow and at Canterbury, whatever may be the outward differences, is inwardly precisely the same thing. This is the kind of atmosphere we want in England.

Or, take another word which, during the last few years, has become very general in English parishes—the title “Father,” as applied to priests. It is only a word, and yet the use of it implies a conception of the sacred ministry which is altogether different from that which is associated with the other word, “Mr.” People may say what they like about the propriety of restricting the title to the Religious Orders; they may urge with truth that even the Roman Catholics—at least in England—have only lately applied it to secular priests; they may point out the

absurdity of phrases such as "Father and Mrs Smith"; and still it remains true that the word expresses the idea we want to emphasise in the relation of priest to people. And beyond all question it is a Catholic idea; it is independent of age, or social distinction, or personal relationship; it carries with it the sense of a supernatural atmosphere.

It may be urged that such things, after all, are details. Perhaps they are; but I believe it is generally true to say that in those churches and parishes where the obligation of "hearing Mass" is insisted on you find the greatest number of people doing so, and Communion most frequent; and that where the priests are known to their people by the name of "Father" you will find the sacrament of penance most generally and naturally used. And these things are not details.

Such things as have been mentioned in this dreadfully scrappy and discursive chapter, and many others which will rise at once to the minds of my readers, do, in fact, create a keenness, an indomitable spirit, which is essential to the spread of Catholicism in our English parishes. The finest atmosphere is found in those places where the fullest evangelical Catholicism holds the field. Development goes on;

the Catholic Revival cannot stop short of its fullest expression in faith and practice. To choose certain parts of it and to reject the rest will never attract and hold the keener sorts of lay people.

CHAPTER XIII

CATHOLICS AND THE PRAYER BOOK

THE charge of disloyalty is one which is continually hurled against Catholic members of the Church of England, priests and laymen. "Thoroughly disloyal" is one of the commonest of Episcopal phrases when speaking of Catholic churches and parishes. Some Bishops are even frank enough to tell us that the whole Catholic party is suspected of disloyalty and that we are not to be trusted. Eminent laymen write to the Church newspapers, calmly saying that when a man develops what they call "Romeward tendencies" it is all up with his honesty ; and so on. And this charge is most commonly formulated with reference to the Prayer Book. "He swore at his ordination [or induction] to use the form in the said book prescribed, and none other except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority ; and he is not doing it. He has introduced all manner of services, and many collects, epistles and gospels, etc.,

which are not in the Prayer Book ; indeed which are wholly at variance with its character and traditions." Some of the best Bishops, while deploring the unsatisfactoriness of the Prayer Book, feel themselves bound to be even more rigid than others in demanding literal obedience to its forms. It hardly seems to occur to our critics, be they bishops or laymen, that we are pained by these accusations of dishonesty. A man is working himself pretty nearly to death in some horribly unattractive slum ; he is doing God's work for God's people in the way which, as he is most firmly convinced, is pleasing to Our Lord and conducive to the salvation of souls. And what happens ? He is lucky indeed if his Bishop ever comes near him, and often he is considered entirely outside the pale of any such possibility. In many cases he can get no curates, or at least they are unlicensed and the grants are refused. The dignified clergy and the influential laymen slight him as a brainless enthusiast, whose work, indeed, they profess to admire, but of whose methods they cannot possibly approve.

And why ? " Oh, he is disloyal to the Prayer Book." This matter is so fundamental, and lies behind so much that has been

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written in this book, that it must be dealt with as carefully as is consistent with the necessary brevity.

Let me say at once that I am not proposing to split hairs. I am not going to discuss the question whether the Prayer Book is binding on Church of England clergy and congregations or not. I take it that whatever may be true about the fact or the absence of formal canonical authority, it is actually the service-book which we have to use and which our congregations expect to hear, at least, in general outline, in the public services of the Church. There is much in the Prayer Book that I do not like, though old custom and the romance of centuries make it in many ways precious to us ; I want to see great alterations, and nothing is gained by refusing to face the facts, or by pretending that they are other than they are. It is in many ways out of date, somewhat meagre and antiquated, and a good deal out of touch with the needs of the times. We must admit that we have travelled far since the days when the Prayer Book was almost universally acclaimed as “ our incomparable Liturgy.”

Nobody obeys the Prayer Book.—The fact is that nobody obeys the Prayer Book—not

archbishops, nor bishops, nor Catholics, nor Moderates, nor Evangelicals. Compare, for instance, our way of treating the Communion Service in the Prayer Book with the way in which Roman Catholics treat the Missal. In the latter case every rubric is exactly obeyed, and even the smallest manual act is regulated. Wherever you go into a church of the Roman obedience you will see precisely the same thing done, in precisely the same way ; for the very few licensed divergencies in a few places are merely the exceptions which prove the rule. But go into Anglican churches and you will hardly find two parishes next to one another treating the Prayer Book in the same way. The difference of use is so great that the service, as carried out in different churches, may be almost unrecognisable as the same thing. Everybody cannot be right, if there is to be any uniformity at all. In point of fact, you may see things done in Episcopal chapels which are not mentioned in the Prayer Book, and you may find parts of the service omitted, in the same chapels, which are ordered by the rubrics to be read. You will find all kinds of liberties taken with the Prayer Book by churches which are approved by Authority without the slightest protest,

when divergencies in another direction, which are equally covered or not covered by the rubrics of the Prayer Book, are "promptly made to cease."

And so on. I might very unprofitably fill a volume with illustrations of this fact. Either because it is too vague, or because it has become impossible to observe the rules strictly, nobody literally obeys the Prayer Book.

But it may be said: "All this is unreal; you are playing with words. Whatever may be said about divergencies in detail, there is a spirit in the Prayer Book which can be captured and obeyed by loyal churchmen." Well, is there? I have always been taught that the Prayer Book was purposely and avowedly formed to include as many points of view as possible; that it was hoped that the old-fashioned Catholics who had survived from the early days of King Henry the Eighth, or the younger ones who had imbibed the spirit of that age, would still be able to attend their parish churches, while at the same time those who approached the Puritan standard might have no difficulty in doing the same. If this is the spirit of the Prayer Book, then we may all claim to be right. The High

Mass, with vestments, lights, incense and ceremonial, is just as loyal as the Communion Service, in which the north end is taken and a plain black stole is worn. If this were generally recognised, there ought to be no difficulty. I am not saying that I wish it to be done, but only that if it were the case, then in plain justice we all ought to be allowed to do as we like. In some dioceses, though not in others, some arrangement of this kind is being tacitly adopted ; but it is difficult to think that it will be permanent. That, however, is not our present concern.

Let us admit that we have all outgrown the Prayer Book—Catholics, Moderates and Evangelicals alike. I am not one of those who maintain that because a book appeared in Reformation times it must therefore be a bad book, as coming from a tainted source. If a liturgy is a good one, or so it seems to me, it does not matter very much when it came into existence ; but if it is an unsatisfactory liturgy, then let us give up trying to force ourselves and other people to be loyal to it, and try to get hold of something better. It is said that, with all its imperfections, the lay people love the Prayer Book ; and, indeed, this is largely true of all of us. But probably it is

not the Prayer Book that the laity love ; it is the way in which it is put before them. Different congregations have come to love different interpretations of the Prayer Book, and in many cases in quite a short time what seemed a heartless and audacious innovation to our fathers and mothers has become the ordinary and accepted and beloved use of their children. Moreover, ceaseless alterations have been going on for a long time in churches of all schools of thought ; even in many Evangelical churches the services are now so ritualistic that they would have been amazing, and indeed horrifying, to our great-uncles and great-aunts if they had been seen in their day. The truth is that practically every thinking churchman knows that revision is needed ; this fact proves conclusively, it seems to me, that the whole of the Church of England has more or less outgrown the Prayer Book.

But let us be more honest still and confess that, after all, Catholics have gone furthest in this direction. There are indeed Catholics now, though I believe they are fewer than they were, who consider that if the Prayer Book were loyally and fully obeyed, there would be no cause for complaint. Therefore, the old

battle cry was : “ We are loyal to the Prayer Book ; we are carrying it out as the framers of it meant that it should be carried out ; we are the only people who are really loyal.” It was an attractive idea, and magnificent things were done by those great men who so nobly tried to work it out. But I am convinced that that day has gone by, and that the Prayer Book needs drastic reform if it is to continue to be possible for Catholics.

Let us take one or two instances in which the Prayer Book has been found wanting. Liturgically, as has been conclusively shown, the Office of Holy Communion, though no doubt sufficient for a valid Mass, is meagre and dislocated. I am no liturgiologist, and I do not feel called upon to specify in detail matter which can be found in many excellent books on liturgical subjects. I write merely as a simple parish priest who has some slight knowledge gained from reading the ordinary books, who feels acutely the losses our rite has sustained and eagerly desires to see them made good again. Many parts of the service were displaced from their ancient and appropriate position at the time of the Reformation. It is difficult to see what liturgical considerations, if any, governed the alterations which

were then made. It is hard to understand why the opportunity was lost of restoring certain very ancient parts which, in the opinion of competent scholars, had dropped out of the pre-Reformation service-book. But it seems clear that liturgical exactness was not part of the equipment of our reformers in the sixteenth century.

Let us consider one or two details.

It has long been found practically necessary to leave out altogether considerable parts of the Prayer Book Communion Service, such as the long Exhortation (always) and the Commandments (often), if we are not to weary our people. But more is necessary for us than permission to omit certain parts of the service now usually left out. It seems clear, upon the face of the Prayer Book, that Mass was only expected to be said on Sundays and on certain great holy days. This may have worked well enough for a long time, and as the Church fell into the torpor of the eighteenth century, when few people felt the need for anything more. But in our time, in an ever-increasing number of churches, Mass is said daily. Where no collects, epistles and gospels are used except those in the Prayer Book there must of necessity be great monotony.

But in these days there must be a rich variety of prayer forms, and the English Church seems half to realise and half to forget this; for she gives us in the Calendar a fairly large number of saints' days for which no proper office is appointed. If a priest wants to say Mass, according to the Prayer Book, on the appointed Feast of St Edward the Confessor, for instance, he must either use the service of the Sunday before, or with doubtful loyalty the service for All Saints' Day, inserting, if he is extremely disloyal, the name of the King and Confessor in the collect. He is in the same position, or even worse, if he wishes to celebrate for the departed. He cannot, in this case, use the service for All Saints' Day, and there is no collect, epistle and gospel in the Prayer Book for use on the occasion. What is he to do?

These are mere instances; but is it not serious that a Prayer Book which is set forth for use by Catholics should have no "Proper of Saints"—no service, that is, for martyrs, virgins or confessors whose names are in the Calendar and whose memory is dear to English hearts?—that there should be no service whatever for Corpus Christi nor the Dedication Festival, nor even for the Harvest

Thanksgiving, nor for Rogation nor Ember Days, nor for the Departed other than the great saints in heaven? But space fails me; a hundred instances rise to all our minds of the utter insufficiency of the Prayer Book for modern or ancient needs. We have outgrown it.

Now it may be said, and truly, that the Church of England is really trying to do something to supply a few, at any rate, of these deficiencies, and that Convocation has been at work for a weary number of years on Prayer Book revision. It is also true that some bishops have authorised the use of a very restricted cycle of collects, epistles and gospels for certain days. It is usually a poor enough selection; if possible culled from sources already in the Prayer Book, and nearly always avoiding, whenever possible, anything known to the Western or even the pre-Reformation English Church. Anyway, none of these is nearly enough. Now that Convocation has at last got out its proposals for revision, they are seen to be quite insufficient. Even if they ever get incorporated in the Prayer Book, they are too timid to please keen men and women. The truth is that something far more drastic by way of reform, not only of the Holy Communion Service, but of the Prayer Book

generally, is greatly and urgently needed if it is ever to express the prayer consciousness of the English Church. And while all these small alterations are being proposed and not carried out, we are all, rightly or wrongly, revising the Prayer Book for ourselves !

But it may be asked : What do you want ? Our complaint is that as a body we are *not* asked ; we are only watched, and forbidden to do the things that we love if and when we are found out. But why should not Catholics be asked by Authority to meet together, and after careful consultation to lay before the Bench of Bishops, or before Convocation, our proposals as to what we really want about Prayer Book revision ?

A complete and honest statement of our desires would do much towards making the authorities understand us better than they do. It is not enough to have individual Catholics in Convocation or on other revising bodies. What always happens is that they put forward some definite Catholic proposal ; it is at once objected to by someone on the other side, who could not possibly hear of it, and after ceaseless discussion a compromise is arrived at which may please Convocation and the moderate body in the Church,

but which leaves the keener spirits on both sides quite cold ; it is of no use to most of the people who really count. And even then the result of the compromise arrived at is nothing. It is no more than the expression of a pious hope of what possibly may come to pass if Parliament, at some distant date, ever gets time to pass it into law !

Was there ever a position so intolerable ? It is utterly unreal, and it has led to a state of things in which everyone, more or less, does what he likes. The Prayer Book has already been unofficially revised in several different ways.

Some people enjoy this ; they say it is only thus that Catholicism can advance. But for myself I hate to be feeling all the time that the Bishop of the Diocese would rather not know what I am doing, the methods I am employing and the kind of service I have. I do not like to hear of bishops proceeding against their clergy in the Law Courts for doing things which are commonplaces in Western Christendom. I do not like to be called disloyal and dishonest, and to be lumped together with those who agree with me as a body of untrustworthy persons who had much better be elsewhere than in their present positions.

And what has brought about all this? Simply a great revival of prayer, of worship, of penitence and of conversion. Simply the re-introduction into the Church of England of the traditional methods of the Catholic Church. We, thousands of us, priests of the Church of England all over the country, are working out these methods, and, as even our opponents admit, with great results—to God be the glory! And how are we met by the authorities? We are told that we are disloyal to the Prayer Book and to the spirit and discipline of the Church of England.

So much the worse, then, for the Prayer Book and the Church of England; for it is they who will have to change and not the doctrines and practices of the historic Catholic Church of Christ throughout the world. In point of fact, that is actually what has happened and what is happening in practice everywhere. The Church of England to-day is a vastly different organisation from what she was in the year 1830. Already she has moved a very long way from those conditions, and though she has a long way to go yet, things are still moving. It is true that not a word of her formularies, not a sentence of the Prayer Book has been changed; but the whole

face of things is different. What was regarded fifty years ago as outside all possibility, things which were denounced and suppressed ruthlessly by Authority, are to-day quite commonplaces, even in moderate churches. History repeats itself, and what has happened once is happening, and will happen again in other circumstances and other cases. But the strain may become intolerable, unless the real state of affairs is fully and sympathetically faced by those whose duty it is to face it. It is not right for bishops to shut their eyes uneasily at what they do not like until they are compelled to see it, and then to persecute their clergy for teaching and actions which are consistent with Catholic doctrine and practice East and West.

Catholics are using collects, epistles and gospels which are not in the Prayer Book ; they are holding many extra services which are not in the Prayer Book. In short, they are doing all kinds of things which are not commonly supposed to be contemplated by the Prayer Book at all. What has happened ?

It simply is that the floods of prayer have burst the flood-gates, and it is useless ever to attempt to set up those flood-gates again. They were antiquated, cramping and

insufficient, and for all practical purposes they are gone. To leave metaphor : Catholics believe that they are justified in using methods for conversion and prayer which, though not contemplated by the Prayer Book, have come back into the Church of England. They were excluded at the Reformation, or fell out gradually in later time. We believe that these things have returned to stay, and that the sooner they are recognised by Authority the sooner will mistrust and mutual recrimination between bishops, clergy and congregations be done away with. We do not want to be disloyal. If we are driven to an attitude that looks like it, that is not our fault, but the fault of formularies which have become too strait for the expression of the religion of the English Church. We have outgrown the Prayer Book.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSIONS

THE salient points of the method which I have attempted very briefly and imperfectly to set forth in this little book will have been clearly seen by those who have been kind enough to read it. They are three.

1. It is plain that the method is no new one. Except in details of small comparative importance, it is an ancient, approved and historical way of converting souls within the Catholic Church.

2. It has grip. It claims to guide and direct souls in the way of righteousness and peace.

3. It is sorely needed by the Church of England at this time of openly confessed failure and need.

In this final chapter I wish to sum up on the lines which follow from these three points.

1. *It is the Historic Catholic Method of dealing with Human Souls.*—No doubt many of my

readers will have exclaimed over and over again : " It is rank, shameless Romanism ; practically everything advocated in the book is Roman ; the whole thought and tendency of it is saturated with Romanism ; it is utterly disloyal to the Church of England."

Well, suppose the Roman method *is* closely followed ; suppose very much of the scheme outlined *is* borrowed from the historical method of the Church of the West, what then ? Is the whole method vitiated by that fact ? Is every loyal English Churchman to turn away from these things in holy horror ?

I often think one of the saddest signs of the times in which we live in the Church of England is the intense and unreasoning bitterness so generally felt and expressed at the very idea of Roman Catholicism. Why is it ? Primarily, I suppose, because in Queen Mary's reign three hundred persons or thereabouts were burnt to death, and we have never been able to forget it. Many of us have succeeded entirely in forgetting that quite as many Roman Catholics were hung, drawn and quartered for the same kind of reasons in the time of Queen Elizabeth. The books from which most of us learnt our history slur over that fact, though the former is remembered ;

and probably the bitter results of religious persecution are still responsible for far more prejudice than most people at all imagine. Can we not at last forget those sad days and begin afresh? It is indeed only too true that Rome (at least in England) makes it very hard for us. We receive no consideration at the hands of her controversialists, and she is especially bitter against those who in the Church of England believe themselves to be and call themselves Catholics. Yet there are not wanting signs that happier days are coming; at least, personal relations for the most part are better than they were. Is it too much to hope that some day not far off there may be at least some kind of general conference for better understanding between us?

But putting that aside for the moment, let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that a good deal of what anti-Roman controversialists say were true instead of being grossly misleading and exaggerated. Would it be wise even then to refuse to examine the obviously great power which we see in her system of going to work? No fair-minded person can deny that, taking both methods together in their visible results to-day, Roman Catholics are better instructed than our own people are

in the truths of the faith. They understand their duty in the practice of religion much better than most of us do, and if the war has told us anything at all, it is that her grasp on her men puts our feebleness utterly to shame.

Now, surely here is something to start us thinking, even if we begin with a strong bias against Rome. Hers is no new method ; it has come down through many centuries. It is the model to which we naturally turn, for, after all, we belong to the Western Church ; our sympathies and our ideas are Western, and it is a tragedy that we should be so divided. This is the rock whence we were hewn and the hole of the pit whence we were digged. I cannot plead for corporate reunion, nor for any easy settlement of our difficulties by "going over to Rome." I am firmly convinced it is our sacred duty to the Church and nation to stay where we are ; but I do not at all see why we should not adopt methods for the salvation of souls which are clearly effective, just because they are Roman. It seems to me to be just the very best reason for testing them.

Moreover, in point of fact, that is exactly what the Oxford Movement has been doing from the first. The whole trend of the Movement throughout has been Westward, and perfectly

naturally so. Our rites, our ceremonial, our vestments, the arrangement of our churches, our devotion, the atmosphere of our spiritual life, the dominant tone of our theology, all are a return to pre-Reformation times, with an inevitable draw towards the more modern methods of the Western Church. Whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not, our tendency is and must be towards Western religious ideals and expressions.

But, after all, it is only in very few things that we are distinctively Roman at all. In its broad outline the method set forth in this book is, in the truest sense, Catholic—that is to say, it is common to East and West. Even those matters which are commonly scouted as Romanising by those who do not understand, such as devotions to Our Lady, the rosary, a lofty conception of the priesthood, the obligation of going to confession and hearing Mass, indeed, almost everything that has been mentioned in this book—all these are just as much Eastern as Western. If people would only think clearly they would realise that in making their demand that the Church of England may be truly Catholic they are asking for a great deal more than they understand, or, in many cases, would be at all pleased

with if they got it. If the official Church of England would only accept all that is certainly common to East and West, she would be in a vastly different condition from that in which she finds herself to-day.

Many an English parish priest has hesitated and feared before he could make up his mind to do something which he felt to be Catholic and right, but which he also felt almost certain would not be acceptable to his people. At last he has done it and found, to his joy, that his people took to it, to use a vulgar but expressive saying, "like ducks to water." It is our experience who have tried the thorough Catholic method that it does, in fact, meet the deepest need of English men and women, and draws out of them latent powers of spiritual growth which neither they nor anyone else believed that they possessed. And what is the reason? It is just because it is the historic Catholic method, which is not now being tried for the first time. Ages before any of us were born, ages before the Reformation, and continuously since, in the vast body of the Church on earth, it has been going on, adding to itself stores of experience and power. The Reformation was a failure, as we can see clearly enough in its effects on English religion

to-day. Why should not we return to the age-long Catholic method on which the Reformation attempted so unsuccessfully to improve ?

2. *It is a Method which grips Souls.*—Among the foremost of the suggestions made by the chaplains in response to the questions sent to them by the National Mission Council are the crying need in the Church of England for authority and a sense of brotherhood. This is not the place to write much about the second of these desirable things ; indeed, it may be said that if only we can get the heart of the Church of England warmed by a sense of real Catholic devotion, the sense of brotherhood would inevitably follow. Wherever you get life and keen enthusiasm, there the sense of unity is sure to grow, as St Paul points out more than once.

Something has already been said in the chapter on Obligation in Religion about the need of regaining the sense of authority. It is enough to say here that most thinking men are feeling the truth of what the chaplains say. What we need in England to-day is a religion which grips, which is not afraid to say clearly, “Thou shalt ” and “Thou shalt not,” which has no fear of the word “must,” in matters which vitally concern the soul. It is one

thing to say, "Wouldn't it be a good thing if you came to church?" it is another thing altogether to say, "You are bound, as a Catholic Christian, to hear Mass every Sunday." It is one thing to say, "I expect you found it rather difficult to keep up your religion at the Front?" It is quite another thing to say, "You must make your confession." We want a religion which grips.

But we are sometimes asked: "Does this method of yours really grip?" and sad instances are given in which it has failed. It is not my intention to boast of results of work at the great church which it is my unspeakable privilege and responsibility to serve; I wish to give certain facts as they stand, not because they are due to any merit of ours who have entered into the labours of others, but simply because they are the only information I have to hand. We have sent from St Alban's, Birmingham, between seventy and eighty regular penitent and communicant men and boys. When they went to the war most of them had hardly ever been away from home for more than a fortnight at a time all through their lives. They know no other church, and no other kind of religion except that in which they had been brought up.

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There is no need to describe particularly the spiritual atmosphere into which they were plunged when they "joined up," nor to say anything about the difficulties and the temptations to give up their religion among which they found themselves. It is enough to say that we have kept in touch with practically all of them, and that the vast majority have kept true to God in their Church and Sacraments, even when things were most difficult. I leave these facts to speak for themselves.

One other point of special interest to the clergy may be mentioned before we pass from the consideration of the holding power of a thorough Catholicism. It provides unrivalled opportunities for the priest to understand his people. Many a good Evangelical or Moderate clergyman has confessed that he loves his congregation, but does not really know them ; that he is ignorant of the real interior life of very many even of his most faithful people. Only the other day a holy and truly hard-working incumbent said at a meeting at which I was present : " These High Churchmen have ways of getting to know their people which we Evangelicals have not." Of course, the whole system postulates that. The parson who is regarded as the

personal and spiritual friend of his flock must get to know them through and through, and that, not that he may use his knowledge tyrannically, but that he may be increasingly effective as a guide and friend, used, as he firmly believes, by the Holy Spirit for the salvation of their souls.

3. *Now, is not this really just what the Church of England wants to-day?*—The complaint of the chaplains is summed up in six words. The sad condition of the Church of England as regards her men has been brought about, they say, by “failure to teach, failure to hold.” There is, in brief, the indictment against us. But it is useless to potter about and work in the way in which so much of the presentation of the National Mission was done. It did not go nearly deep enough, it had no fixed objective, and though the Mission did much good, if only in getting so many priests into retreat and in strengthening the faithful, it can bear no fruit unless the pregnant words of the chaplains which I have quoted above are deeply taken to heart.

Now, here is a proposed method. It cannot be said that it is not clear-cut. Some of its opponents attack it on the very ground that it is “so narrow.” But if the official

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Church of England were doing anything really effective, we would look into it with the greatest sympathy ; it is just because so little is being done, because churches are emptying and the Sacraments are being forsaken, because the Church is drifting more and more out of touch with the needs of men, that we are so impatient, and hurt many whom we are unwilling to hurt, by outspoken criticism. It must be remembered that we are men greatly mistrusted ; we are going on working in an atmosphere of suspicion which is not easy to bear. It is hard for a priest to feel that when he is giving his life for the English Church and her people he should be quite unable to turn in his difficulties to that one person who ought to be his most natural confidant—I mean the Bishop of his Diocese. What sustains us is the consciousness that, after all, we are right, and that though things may move slowly, yet the end is sure.

But when will the Church of England understand ? I often wonder how she dares to persecute Catholicism. Is she so successful ? Has she so completely got the heart of the nation that she can afford to look coldly on the work that Catholics are doing for her ? Is she so sure that she is doing right and that

the *via media* is still the way to travel? She may think so; but will she not recognise fully and generously the help we are giving her? We have been out in the cold for a long time. If we ask for a place in the sun it is not for ourselves, but that we may give more effectively to the Church of England what we are convinced that she so sorely needs.

Objections considered

I have tried as fully as I could all through this book to consider my opponents' case. Many points in it have, no doubt, escaped me, but I have tried to write positively with objections in my mind rather than to be merely negatively on the defence. There are, however, three important criticisms which ought to be cleared up. They are:

1. By what authority are these things done?

2. What happens to your people when they get away from your atmosphere?

3. How do you account for the failure of a good many Catholic churches?

1. *By what Authority?*—It is very continually urged upon us both by our opponents in the Church of England and by the Roman

Catholic controversialists that our real place is Rome, and that we ought to go there. We are doing things, they say, which are clearly disloyal to the Church of England, and it would be only honest to go where these things have full authority. But is that quite true? Are we disloyal to the Church of England? The question has been partially dealt with in the consideration of our attitude to the Prayer Book and at other points in this book. It is only necessary to repeat here that the Church of England formularies at the Reformation were avowedly drawn up so as to include as many as possible of all the warring forms of religion which were then existing. Has that ceased to be true? Has there been any fundamental alteration in the formularies and articles since those days? If so, I never heard of it. Political reasons forced Catholics who held with the Papacy to sever themselves from the Church of England in Elizabeth's reign. Politics are no longer the difficulty in these days. Is there less room for Catholics in the Church of England than there was then? I have always learnt that the Church of England was comprehensive. What, then, are the limits of her comprehension? It would seem that if she is to continue to hold together

as at present, she will have to comprehend in time all forms of historical Christianity, as well as many forms which have not yet appeared. If so, why not the fullest expression of Catholicism ?

But the real question is : Has the Church of England a separate existence, apart from the rest of the Catholic Church ? Has she ever denied or added to the faith once for all delivered to the saints ? does her Creed contain articles not to be found in the Creed professed by the Roman Church ? Or has she taken away anything from the deposit common to East and West ? Indeed, I hope not. I believe very firmly that the Church of England has not denied or rejected in any point the great system held in common by the rest of the Church of Christ. What we are doing is simply claiming and vindicating our true heritage, which has been partly lost to us through neglect and misunderstanding. On what principle can the Church of England recite the Creeds, continue the apostolic orders and claim to be the same body as before the Reformation, if we have devised a new system involving departures from the faith on which the whole Church was agreed for centuries, and which are set forth in the

Creeds we still recite as a statement of our own beliefs? We must not be taken in by mistaken views of the position of the Church of England. Our formularies are capable of a Catholic interpretation and we claim to be justified in using that interpretation to the full. There must always be certain peculiarities in different parts of the Church ; but these are of trivial, minor importance ; the Church of England shares the faith and the mind and the system of the Catholic Church, of which we are a part, and to that Catholic Church we appeal as our authority.

2. *What happens to your People when they get away from your Atmosphere ?*—It is all very well, people say ; you bring your people up on these lines, and while they are with you they are very happy ; but when they go away from you and cannot get all they want, they either go to Rome or drift off and go nowhere.

I really cannot think that this is our fault, even if it were true. We can only train our people according to the best methods we know, and make them as good Christians and Catholics as we can. Surely if they should fail when they leave us it is the fault of the Church of England system, which will not provide, in so many parishes, for the needs

of the people we have brought up. I am not excusing those comparatively few who fall away ; they ought to, and often do, heroically hold on to the bare minimum of Church and Sacraments which are provided for them. And, indeed, it would be well for our critics to realise what our people in numberless places in England are bearing. In country places they may be many miles from the nearest priest who knows how to hear a confession. They are often without an early Celebration, except very occasionally ; they may have all the inconvenience of fasting until after midday. They have no one anywhere who will understand or help them in their difficulties, let alone who will direct their spiritual life. Their views are often treated with disapproval or with a pleasantry which is worse than disapproval. They are often entirely alone ; they miss all the warmth and support of the church and the services they have left, and yet they struggle on. This kind of thing is happening everywhere, and for many a Catholic it is a life-long exile. I do not wonder that sometimes they give up, or join the Roman Church. I honour and respect those thousands of faithful men and women who are keeping true through all

discouragements and loneliness. If only our really kind and sympathetic Church of England clergy would realise more what these people are suffering, that discovery in itself, with the consequences which must needs follow, would do very much to help the Catholic cause.

Then, about those who go to Rome. I must confess again that I am sometimes surprised there are not more of them. Many of the men and women whose lot I have just tried to explain have Roman churches close by them. The act of being "received" would put an immediate end to all their difficulties, and they would find themselves once more in the cheerful warmth of a Catholic atmosphere. They are constantly urged to do so, but they will not; they are true, and rightly true, to their principles. Many of them know all that I have written about the effectiveness and success of the Roman Church, but still they feel that their place is within the Church of their Sacraments, and they are faithful; they stay. It is worth mentioning that of the men and boys I wrote about just now only one has gone to Rome—from the west coast of Ireland.

Yet, there are some who do go; but it is

worth while pointing out that they are by no means always those from "extreme" churches. A very much larger number go over because they cannot get the Sacraments administered as they ought to be, or because the atmosphere of the church they have to attend is utterly and avowedly Protestant or Moderate, than because they cannot get Benediction or the rosary. It is their difficulties about the Catholicism of the Church of England—unreal difficulties, in truth—which are forced upon them by the things they see and the things they hear which drive out most who go. Again I say it is the business of the Church of England, if she wants to keep Catholics, to provide them with the needs of their souls. She is responsible, and not we, for their defection if they go.

3. *Failure of Catholic Churches*.—"It does not 'go' in many places, for all you say about its power and attractiveness. Many Catholic churches are practically empty, and many of them were better attended before the Catholic way of things was started there."

Yes, but it must be remembered that the Movement is yet in its infancy, and that English men and women are more conservative about religion, if possible, than they are

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about anything else. Moreover, the idea of obligation, though it is spreading, has gone but a very little way yet. Religion is still a matter of personal taste rather than duty, for most Englishmen. It is very difficult to reconcile the present generation to changes which are of such far-reaching importance as those we have been considering.

Moreover, I wonder whether the Bishops and dignitaries who are so ready to find fault with Catholic churches realise how much they are themselves responsible for the failures they point out to us? It is notorious that in very many dioceses no opportunity is lost of attacking Catholic priests or belittling their work. Any malcontent has a good chance of getting a sympathetic hearing of his complaint, though he may not live in the parish, or may even be no more than an occasional visitor. And where there is no active persecution the exceedingly tepid appreciation accorded by Authority to the labours carried on in Catholic parishes easily shades off into more active disapproval. In nineteen out of twenty Catholic congregations it is notorious to most of the people that the bishop disapproves of a great part of what is being done, while other influential clergy

seldom miss an opportunity of expressing their profound mistrust of the methods employed by their brother priests in question.

Is it strange that, with such an atmosphere surrounding them, some priests grow discouraged? The wonder is that the Catholic Movement has advanced by leaps and bounds in the face of these injustices, and that there is such splendid vitality in churches and congregations almost everywhere.

Yet it is true that many of the clergy who make changes, though they are keen and earnest men, have so little knowledge themselves of the full bearings of Catholicism, as worked out in parishes, that they make quite unnecessary mistakes. I have often known furious opposition aroused, and a priest's life made positively unbearable, for the sake of something which was of no importance whatever, or even was a piece of incorrect ceremonial or Church furniture.

More serious still, troubles sometimes arise through mistakes owing to want of training in the administration of the Sacraments. What we need is exact knowledge for our clergy, and the sooner the Theological Colleges realise this the sooner will many unnecessary tragedies be averted. The trouble

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is that at present so much depends upon the man himself in our parishes. It is not understood that he is the priest of God first and foremost, and that everything else is secondary ; and therefore personal mistakes and indiscretions gain an importance which is disproportionate. It is believed that the priest does things which are unpopular just because he likes them and not because they are part of the method of the Catholic Church.

I do not dwell upon scandals or upon utter tactlessness ; for the pity of these and their bitter effects are universally acknowledged. What we need, as has been shown above, is a sense of Catholicism, of obligation in religion, behind the personality of the priest in his parish. Only let our priests be fully and completely trained for their priestcraft ; only let the teaching of the Church be fearlessly, lovingly and tactfully given, not cast down before our people, to be taken or left at pleasure, but commended by a faithful and true pastor, and it must tell. Only let things be done openly and fearlessly and be fully explained. Let the idea of obligation in penitence and worship, in prayer and communion, be firmly and tenderly set forth and things will right themselves. The Catholic

method has not really had a chance in England yet, but I believe the day is coming when it will be properly worked out and clearly understood.

And, after all, when everything has been said, and criticisms faced, the Catholic Movement is making way everywhere. The signs of the times are unmistakable ; we have only to go on, fearlessly and faithfully, and the truth must prevail. The time appointed may be long, but the vision is sure.

I have done. The task has been a difficult one, in the ceaseless rush and labour of a great parish ; difficult, too, because it must often have seemed, though I have tried earnestly not to do so, that I have been setting myself up to instruct my brethren. Indeed, it is not so. I have only learnt what little I know by the bitter experience of many and great mistakes, turned by the grace of God into humiliating blessings. I have written because I believe, with many others who are doing a far greater work than I, that we have found a way which is old and yet new, by which the devotion of Christian souls here in England may be deepened and God's Kingdom enlarged.

May Jesus Christ be loved and praised.

APPENDIX

THE following is a short and introductory list of books dealing with some of the points raised in the preceding pages.

THE PRIESTHOOD—

Keatinge: "The Priest: his Character and Work."

Manning: "The Eternal Priesthood."

Newbolt: "Priestly Blemishes."

Newbolt: "Priestly Ideals."

Liddon: "The Priest in his Inner Life."

Tissot: "The Interior Life."

THE HOLY MASS—

Fortescue: "The Mass: a Study of the Roman Liturgy."

Procter and Frere: "The Book of Common Prayer."
"The English Missal."

CEREMONIAL—

Baldeschi: "Ceremonial according to the Roman Rite" (*Trans.* Dale).

O'Callaghan: "The Sacred Ceremonies of Low Mass." A. Fortescue.

PSYCHOLOGY—

W. James: "The Principles of Psychology."

W. James: "Talks on Psychology and Life's Ideals."

Starbuck: "The Psychology of Religion."

THE CATECHISM—

Dupanloup: "The Ministry of Catechising."

Spencer Jones: "The Clergy and the Catechism."

Newland Smith: "The Catechist's Handbook."

PREPARATION FOR SACRAMENTS—

Knox : “ Pastors and Teachers.”

DEVOTIONAL BOOKS—

“ Catholic Prayers.”

“ The Christian’s Companion.” } (Pub. by Knott.)

“ St Swithin’s Prayer Book.”

SUNDAY EVENING—

Paul Bull : “ Missioner’s Handbook.”

“ Exposition and Benediction ” (Three Priests of the
Diocese of Birmingham. S.S.P.P.).

MORAL THEOLOGY—

Belton : “ A Manual for Confessors.”

Schieler-Heuser : “ Theory and Practice of the
Confessional.”

Reuther : “ Neo-Confessarius ” (*Trans.*).

Slater : “ Manual of Moral Theology.”

Lehmkuhl : “ Theologia Moral.” A big book in
Latin.

RESERVATION—

Darwell Stone : “ Reservation of the Blessed
Sacrament.”

THE SAINTS—

Wirgman : “ The Blessed Virgin and All the Company
of Heaven ” (Cope & Fenwick).

CONFESSION—

Baverstock : “ The Priest as Confessor ” (Cope &
Fenwick).

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